



New Creation Teaching Ministry

1999 PASTOR'S MONDAY STUDY GROUP NOTES

Christology Series

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Preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom

INTRODUCTION: THE GOSPEL THAT ALWAYS WAS

There has always been a gospel in the sense in which the New Testament speaks. It tells us that before the foundation of the world a Lamb was slain (Rev. 13:8; cf. I Pet. 1:19–21), that before humanity was created God had predestined it in love to be His sons through Christ Jesus, and to redeem us by Christ's blood (Eph. 1:3–8). Second Timothy 1:8–10 spells out the matter clearly:

Do not be ashamed then of testifying to our Lord, nor of me his prisoner, but share in suffering for the gospel in the power of God, who saved us and called us with a holy calling, not in virtue of our works but in virtue of his own purpose and the grace which he gave us in Christ Jesus ages ago, and now has manifested through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.

Not only was the gospel determined before time but it was proclaimed in time, in Genesis 3:15 (often called 'the proto-evangel'), 'I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel'. Paul tells us in Galatians 3:8, 'And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, "In you shall all the nations be blessed"'. To put it simply, the gospel was always in the mind of God, and He had purposed before time that it should happen in time and affect all humanity. In that sense there has always been the gospel of God. 'Gospel of God' is a common term in the New Testament.¹

'The Gospel of God' and 'The Gospel of the Kingdom'

The question is, 'Are the gospel of God and the gospel of the kingdom the one gospel'? The answer must be, 'Yes', but then the answer must be qualified or explained. Literally, 'the gospel of the Kingdom' is the good news that God is King over all the earth, and in particular, intimately King of those who are obedient to God and therefore *de jure* members of His Kingdom, and not as those who are only *de facto* members of His Kingdom, for these do not see God as good news, being fallen, rebellious or indifferent to God. 'We will not have this One to rule over us', is their thought and attitude. 'The gospel of God' is that gospel which the Father brought into full being through His Son, Jesus Christ, who came into the world to create it as the means of saving humanity.² It is not difficult to see that if the Kingdom is the good news of God's Kingly rule over all creation, then that Kingly rule will also be worked out as 'salvation history' (*heilsgeschichte*) in time. God's salvation begins its action in Eden at the time of the fall of Man. Matthew 25:34 places the making of the Kingdom as being before time, 'Then the King will say to those at his right hand, "Come, O blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world"'. In one sense we can say the kingdom of God is prior to time, is always present in time and has an eschatological

¹ It is interesting to trace the different titles of the gospel. It is called 'the gospel of God', 'the gospel of Jesus Christ', 'the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ', 'the gospel of the kingdom' and Paul often calls it 'my gospel'. He does not mean that 'the gospel of Christ' is one which Christ owns, but is that which he formed, and so it concerns him—Christ. 'My gospel' means that he is intimately linked with it: it is his life, so to speak.

² P. T. Forsyth's book, *The Preaching of Jesus and the Gospel of Christ* (NCPI, 1987) should be read by all. Its thesis is that Christ alone knows this gospel, for it was he alone who formed it. No one has ever stated this proposition quite like Forsyth.

climax at the end of time, and is present in all eternity. There are, of course, many other aspects of the Kingly rule of God, and many of these we shall see.

THE GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM HAS ALWAYS BEEN PROCLAIMED

The Kingdom Proclaimed in and by Creation

God is King over all the earth because He is Creator of it, yet before He creates anything He is King. In the unity of the Trinity the Father is *fons divinitatis*, the One Who has the *prius* in the Triune relationships. In that sense He is Head and King within the Godhead. We should see, at this point, that kingship is rejected by a large portion of mankind: ‘Who made you to be a ruler over us?’ and ‘We will not let this man reign over us’. Protagonists of freedom seek liberation from royal domination, as they see it. ‘Imperialism’ is a word used to denote God’s Kingship as a rulership which denies human freedom. Yet it is Man himself who was created by God to be king over all the earth. Genesis 1:28 has it:

And God blessed them, and God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth’.

Psalm 8:5–6 is quite clear. Speaking of Man’s creation and royalty it says:

Yet thou hast made him little less than God,
and dost crown him with glory and honor.
Thou hast given him dominion over the works of thy hands;
thou hast put all things under his feet.

Man’s image of God is a royal one. If Man is king, then his Creator is King in a way which transcends that which is His image. Zechariah speaks of God as, ‘the King, the LORD of hosts’. The hosts are the angelic creatures, so God is seen as King over His creation in its celestial and terrestrial structures. God expresses His royalty through that which He creates. It is worth noting that in the Scriptures there is an hierarchical order in all the creatures.

God’s Kingly Rule Proclaimed by His Judgment of Evil in His Creation

Part of the Kingly rule is God’s judgments upon that which we may call ‘the kingdom of darkness, or evil’. This is a surrogate kingdom, the kingdom of the serpent, the kingdom of deceit and darkness as against the Kingdom of truth and light. It manifests itself in the universal violence and corruption throughout the earth, which God judged in the Flood. Likewise the arrogance of Nimrod which lay in arrogating a kingdom of men to himself—‘a mighty hunter *of men*’—was manifest in his progeny as they sought to build the tower of Babel. This was judged as also was the evil of Sodom and Gomorrah. Romans 1:18 tells us that constantly and consistently the wrath of God is being revealed from heaven upon all ungodliness and wickedness of men who by their wickedness suppress the truth. Israel in rebelling against its King also met the same treatment, and the Book of the Revelation speaks of God’s Kingly acts of retributive justice. The ultimate act of His judgment is to destroy all forces of evil. Part of the gospel of the Kingdom is this expression of God’s Kingly rule. It is a comfort to those who are true members of the Kingdom of God.

God’s Kingly Being Proclaimed by the Creation of Israel as His Kingly Nation

The term ‘kingdom of God’ or ‘kingdom of heaven’ is not found, as such, in the Old Testament, but its idea is certainly strongly present. David voiced this at the thanksgiving

service for the gathering together of materials and funds to build the first temple. In I Chronicles 29:10–13 he cries:

Therefore David blessed the LORD in the presence of all the assembly; and David said: ‘Blessed art thou, O LORD, the God of Israel our father, for ever and ever. Thine, O LORD, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty; for all that is in the heavens and in the earth is thine; thine is the kingdom, O LORD, and thou art exalted as head above all. Both riches and honor come from thee, and thou rulest over all. In thy hand are power and might; and in thy hand it is to make great and to give strength to all. And now we thank thee, our God, and praise thy glorious name’.

The Kingdom of God is Israel. It is the kingdom which is to show the Kingship of God to all the nations. Exodus 19:5–6 declare this:

Now therefore, if you will obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my own possession among all peoples; for all the earth is mine, and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These are the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel.

Israel’s kingdom was to be in stark contrast to the kingdoms of the world. These kingdoms of the world are greatly discussed in Israel’s history, especially by the prophets. The prophecy of Daniel is outstanding in this respect. Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, becomes exceedingly proud of his building of Babylon and is told that he must be humbled in his pride. His own confession is stated in Daniel 4:34–37. His conclusion was:

At the end of the days I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to heaven, and my reason returned to me, and I blessed the Most High, and praised and honored him who lives for ever; for his dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom endures from generation to generation; all the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing; and he does according to his will in the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand or say to him, ‘What doest thou?’ (vv. 34–35).

Here is a spirit other than that of the rebellious Adam, Cain, Lamech and Nimrod. Nebuchadnezzar’s words state the whole principle of the Kingdom of God in the Old Testament. The words of Daniel the prophet in 7:11–27 give us a further view of this proclaimed, future Kingdom. All the time we are aware of the kingdom of the serpent, the kingdom of darkness and deceit, seeking by all means—idolatry for example—to subvert God as King. Israel as God’s special Kingdom was to a great degree disappointing. Its history does not present Kingdom life as an ideology. The original sin which Paul speaks about in Romans chapter 5 has continually to be taken into account.

The Kingdom of God is Proclaimed by the Prophets

Not only Daniel but other prophets proclaim the coming Kingdom. In Zechariah 9:9 Israel’s king is proclaimed, but in 14:9 God is proclaimed as King over all the earth. David’s kingdom appears to be universal and a theocracy, God being its real King: ‘And the LORD will become king over all the earth; on that day the LORD will be one and his name one’. This ‘day of the LORD’ points to the climax of God’s triumph and evil’s doom. It is the prophetic proclamation that is taken up in Israel, preparing them for the coming of the messianic king, ‘great David’s greater son’. John the Baptist is the last of the great prophets and unique in that the Kingdom he prophesies came into view in his day. Luke 16:16 gives us a good view: ‘The law and the prophets were until John; since then the good news of the kingdom of God is preached, and every one enters it violently’.

The Kingdom of God is Proclaimed by John the Baptist and Jesus

We are now on the familiar ground of the New Testament, but let us have a backward look. There never was a time in history when the Kingship of God was not proclaimed, but in John and Jesus a somewhat different proclamation is made. The Kingdom of heaven, or the

Kingdom of God, is at hand.³ John calls for repentance for the remission of sins. He has three things in mind: (i) the universal Kingdom; (ii) universal forgiveness—'Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world'; and (iii) the universal outpouring of the Spirit—'He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire'.

Jesus calls for repentance and faith. Mark 1:14–15 says:

Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, and saying, 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent, and believe in the gospel'.

The time has come for us to speak of the fact that the gospel of the Kingdom must in some sense be already formed, or Jesus could not call for his hearers to believe it. We say, then, that the Kingdom of God is everlasting, is the reality of God being over all things, that its projected goal is to defeat all evil, cleanse the Kingdom of all rebellion and thus establish the Kingdom for ever. The Kingdom of God is universal, but in the more intimate sense it is the Kingship of God over His faithful, obedient sons and servants. A kingdom has a monarch, a realm, and a people who are governed. The Kingdom of God has God as its Monarch, the community of its members as its realm,⁴ thus including all celestial and terrestrial creatures who have been included in the Kingdom, and these have communion with their beloved King.

Jesus' parables tell us much about the Kingdom. They speak of it as a mystery. Those who would enter must be begotten from above, by the Holy Spirit. They cannot enter the Kingdom with ambition for themselves. They must be of no account as were little children in the society of his day. There were many in the kingdom of Israel which was, properly speaking, the Kingdom of God, but they were not in true relationship with the King and therefore not really of the Kingdom. Yet the gospel of the Kingdom which related to God being King for Israel (cf. Isa. 52:7, 'How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good tidings, who publishes peace, who brings good tidings of good, who publishes salvation, who says to Zion, "Your God reigns"'), was known to the Israel of Jesus' day.

Jesus told his disciples that the Kingdom was a mystery and only those to whom it was given could/would understand the mystery. New birth was essential to both seeing and entering the Kingdom. All of this was linked with his own person and works.

JESUS THE TRUE KING

The magi who came to Herod asked him, 'Where is he who has been born king of the Jews?' This was to be the King of Psalm 2:6, 'I have set my king on Zion, my holy hill', Psalm 110:1 and Psalm 89—among other prophecies such as Isaiah 11:10, 'In that day the root of Jesse shall stand as an ensign to the peoples; him shall the nations seek, and his dwellings shall be glorious', and Isaiah 9:7, 'Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David, and over his kingdom, to establish it, and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and for evermore'. Zechariah 9:9 was understood to pertain to the Davidic king, and the people understood this as they welcomed their king into Jerusalem. Daniel 7:11–27 speak of the Kingdom of the Son of man.

God's affirmation of His Son both at his baptism and his transfiguration as being His beloved Son in whom He was well pleased (Ps. 2:6–9; Isa. 42:1–2; cf. 61:1f.), as also the use of Psalm 2 in the Epistles and Revelation, show that God was crowning Jesus King of the Kingdom. This Kingship is borne out in Ephesians 5:5 and Revelation 11:15. Jesus was

³ Note that the terms 'kingdom of God' and 'kingdom of heaven' are virtually synonymous. It is thought that the term 'kingdom of heaven' is mostly used with a regard for the Divine name, so that it would not be used, but rather a circumlocution for that name—'the kingdom of heaven'. From Pentecost onwards the term used is 'kingdom of God'.

⁴ By the people as the realm we are not putting a perimeter fence around God's Kingdom nor denying the universality of His reign.

accused of trying to make himself King of Israel, but his words to Pilate make it clear that his kingdom was that of God and in no way political.⁵ It was, of course, primarily of Israel, but was to be universal. The people had welcomed him into Jerusalem as their king, but Jesus explained the true Kingdom to Pilate. In John 19:12 the rulers of the Jews sought to discredit Jesus as a king-maker: 'If you release this man, you are not Caesar's friend; everyone who makes himself a king sets himself against Caesar'. Now Jesus answers the question of Pilate:

Pilate said to him, 'So you are a king?' Jesus answered, 'You say that I am a king. For this I was born, and for this I have come into the world, to bear witness to the truth. Every one who is of the truth hears my voice' (John 18:37).

Behind this answer there was strong reference to the kingdom of this world—Satan's—for it was of the lie, the deceit. Yes, he was establishing his Kingdom, and this verse is one of the keys to that fact.

Jesus the New King, the True Adam

At this juncture we need to see that from the time of his baptism—coronation Jesus had been King. He was the King proclaiming the Kingdom. This can be seen in Matthew 4:23: 'And he went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and preaching the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every infirmity among the people'. Again in Matthew 9:35: 'And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every disease and every infirmity'. In Matthew 12:28 he virtually claims to be the King: 'But if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you'. Acts 10:38 is in line with these utterances, 'how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; how he went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him'. All the elements we are treating about Jesus' ministry are to do with the Kingdom of God and the active King, the incarnate Son who is the true image of God, and more than Adam was, even in his state of being innocent. This King cares for his people. Demonic powers retreat before him or are helpless under his treatment. Those who have been under the powers of demons in being possessed of spirits of sickness or tormented by the inhabiting spirits are released by the King.⁶ He is proving to be the King of Psalms 2 and 110, to saying nothing of Psalm 89 and the Ruler spoken about by the prophets.

The Gospel of the Cross

Jesus told Pilate, 'My kingship is not of this world', and by so saying was insisting that he had kingly power. He had told his disciples that the ruler (prince) of this world was coming and that he—Satan—had no power over him (John 14:30–31). He had defeated Satan in the temptations which took place in the wilderness. Later he had seen Satan fall as lightning from heaven. He had told his listeners, 'Now is the judgment of this world, now shall the ruler [prince] of this world be cast out'. He went to the Cross to do that. Later John the apostle wrote, 'for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil.' At the Cross Jesus carried out this incredibly tall order, and that he succeeded is borne out by Hebrews 2:14–15 and Colossians 2:14–15. We must understand this success—what it was and is, and how it is in action today.⁷ Here it was the

⁵ In John 6:15 we read, 'Perceiving then that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, Jesus withdrew again to the mountain by himself'.

⁶ Even the seventy disciples whom Jesus sent out were delighted that even the demons were subject to them in Christ's name. It was a new thing for humans to have such power, even delegated power. Jesus told them, 'I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven'. He added, 'Behold, I have given you authority to tread upon serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy; and nothing shall hurt you'. So vast, then, were the powers of Christ.

⁷ I suggest we constantly do research into the action of the Cross, especially its victory theme which is truly the Kingdom theme. See *Christus Victor* by Gustaf Aulen (SPCK, 1978), my *Christ's Cross over Man's Abyss* (NCPI, 1994), James Denney's *The Death of Christ* (Tyndale, 1952), and his *The Christian Doctrine of Reconciliation* (James Clark, 1959), K. Schilder's *Christ Crucified* (Klock & Klock, 1978), and P. T. Forsyth's *The Cruciality of the Cross* (NCPI, 1984). It is easy to grow stale in this subject and when we do our evangelistic zeal dims. We no longer proclaim the Kingdom. I would especially urge all preachers to read P. T. Forsyth's *The Preaching of Jesus and the Gospel of Christ* (NCPI, 1987).

Stronger-than-the-strong-man who had overcome the strong man—Satan (cf. Luke 11:14–23). Undoubtedly the power which Satan and his powers had held over Man was the guilt of sins: it brought up fear of death which is fear of judgment. We see, then, that when Jesus obtained forgiveness of sins for the human race he destroyed the one great weapon the kingdom of darkness had wielded. God's Kingship was revealed and in a way established by the victory of the Cross. There is no suggestion that God's Kingdom was not always established, but at the point of time of the victory of the Cross the quality of that Kingdom was revealed. God is not the God of brute strength, but the God of love, and His love won at the Cross over loveless evil. If we would proclaim the gospel of the Kingdom as the gospel of salvation, then we need to have all the elements of that action of the Cross deeply embedded in our hearts and minds. By application of reading and prayer we need to resonate on the theme of Christ's victory of the Cross.

We have seen that Ephesians 5:5 and Revelation 11:15 speak of the Kingdom as being of two Kings, the Son and the Father. Whilst Christ had undone Satan and his kingdom at the Cross, much remained to be done by Christ the King, in history which follows the Cross, the Resurrection and Ascension; and it happens in the time of his reigning in heaven, and this is the thrust of I Corinthians 15:24–28 and the Book of the Revelation. In accordance with Psalm 2:6–7 and 110:1—amongst other prophecies—this true King of the Kingdom, Christ the second and last Adam, established the Kingdom of God amongst mankind, and is thus fulfilling the mandate of Genesis 1:28f. Against this victory Satan has no answer. The gospel of forgiveness, the gospel of the defeat of all Man's enemies,⁸ and the gospel of liberation, has been irreversibly established. We can say, then, that now the gospel of the Kingdom is indeed the gospel of salvation, the good news of God's victory in Christ, and the valid basis for bringing men and women into the Kingdom of God. At the commencement of Christ's ministry the gospel had not been established in the way it came to be at the Cross, the Resurrection, the Ascension and the Session at God's right hand. Christ became the gospel of victory and salvation, and in order to know this we must have the mystery of Christ opened to us by the Spirit and communicated by the Spirit through us to our audiences.

THE PROCLAMATION OF THE GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM BEGAN AT PENTECOST

When the Spirit came at Pentecost he especially opened the mystery of the gospel to the apostles so that they could proclaim the gospel as 'the apostolic truth', truth which remained forever set out to and for the Church. The revelation of the Spirit came not only to the apostles but to all present at Pentecost (Acts 2), at Samaria (Acts 8) and at Caesarea (Acts 10 – 11), and indeed he always gives understanding of the gospel to those who believe in Christ.⁹

The text of Acts records the preaching of the gospel and it is soon evident that the term 'gospel of the Kingdom' is not mentioned as such. This does not mean 'the gospel of the Kingdom' is not preached. To think of the gospel of the Kingdom and the gospel of salvation as two different gospels or two aspects of the one gospel is not good enough. Acts 2:36

⁸ By 'all Man's enemies' we mean Satan, the world, the world's evil powers, sin, death, the flesh, the idols. For sinful Man enemies are also God's wrath and the law of God. For Christ to have destroyed the works of the devil is to have annulled their power and set humanity free.

⁹ There can be no doubt that the gospel of the Kingdom as apostolic truth comes to us from the New Testament corpus as a whole. We must not go beyond what it says, or understand less than it says, if we would proclaim the gospel of the Kingdom. Even so, the presence and revelation of the Spirit is essential for our understanding of the gospel as he is essential for communicating the gospel to the—as yet—unredeemed humanity.

(cf. 3:14–15; 5:31; 10:42; 17:31) makes it clear that Christ is Messiah–King: ‘Let all the house of Israel therefore know assuredly that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified’. Acts 1:8 is a statement Jesus utters after having taught them the things of the Kingdom during his last forty days on earth, ‘But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth’. To be his witnesses is to proclaim the gospel of the Kingdom.¹⁰ Because the apostles would not have differentiated between ‘the gospel of God’, ‘the gospel of Christ’ and ‘the gospel of the Kingdom’, there is no need for us to be fastidious about the genitives of the gospel. The substance of the preaching known as the *kerugma* shows the victory of Christ and the liberation of those who would believe. It is interesting to note in Acts 4:24–30 that the early church prayed a prayer which reveals the people’s strong understanding of the gospel, and especially its victory note. They understood Christ as Victor.

In Acts 8 Philip, driven out of Jerusalem by the persecution which followed Stephen’s death, went to Samaria where he ‘proclaimed to them the Christ’. In 8:12 we read, ‘But when they believed Philip as he preached good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women’. In Acts 14:22 Paul tells the newly ordained elders and the people of the new churches, that through much tribulation will we all enter the Kingdom of God. In Acts 19:8–20 Paul first argues and pleads about ‘the kingdom of God’. Signs and wonders attest to the presence and action of the Kingdom (cf. I Cor. 4:20). Then there is the account of the sons of Sceva attempting exorcism of spirits, which failed. At that point the gospel of the Kingdom so affects believers that they utterly reject any link with the occult and a great triumph over it takes place. In Acts 20:21–25 Paul equates preaching ‘the gospel of the Kingdom’ with ‘the gospel of the grace of God’. In Acts 28:23 and 31 Paul testifies to the kingdom of God and preaches it to the Jews and others who came to him. All of these events show us that the gospel of the Kingdom was very much in the apostolic mind.

In the Epistles the reality of the Kingdom of God is well known, and in the Revelation the whole prophecy is concerned with that Kingdom. Thus we see that the proclaiming of the gospel of the Kingdom began at Pentecost and concludes in the Revelation with the people of God becoming ‘kings and priests unto their God’ and showing that ‘they shall reign on the earth’ (Rev. 1:6; 5:10; 20:4; cf. 3:21).

PROCLAIMING THE GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD TODAY

We now look at what is our part in the proclamation of the gospel of Christ—the gospel of the Kingdom—today. We must keep in mind the following:

The Kingdom of God is Christ’s Kingdom

If we do not believe in heart and mind that Christ rules as King over all the Kingdom in its widest dimensions as creation and in its intimate nature as the Kingdom of the redeemed, then we will not proclaim the gospel of the Kingdom with power and assurance. We need to see and believe that it is Christ’s own Kingdom, however that may relate to the Father also being King. The following Scriptures bear out his unique Kingship:

¹⁰ When Christ told the apostles in Matthew 16:19, ‘I will give you [‘thee’ (*soi*), to Peter alone] the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven’, then it is interesting to note that Peter was present at Pentecost, Samaria and Caesarea when the Kingdom, so to speak, was opened to Jew, Samaritan and Gentile. Matthew 18:18 speaks of opening and shutting—binding and loosing—and here *all* the apostles are addressed (‘you’, *humin*). It is debated whether this use of the keys of the Kingdom means the same thing in Matthew 16:19 and 18:18, but whatever the argument, the facts are that there was a use of the apostolic word to open the Kingdom to Jew, Samaritan and Gentile.

The Son of man will send his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all evildoers (Matt. 13:41).

Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom (16:28).

Jesus said to them, 'Truly, I say to you, in the new world, when the Son of man shall sit on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel' (19:28).

And he said to her, 'What do you want?' She said to him, 'Command that these two sons of mine may sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your kingdom' (20:21).

When the Son of man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne (25:31).

And he said, 'Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom' (Luke 23:42).

Jesus answered, 'My kingship is not of this world; if my kingship were of this world, my servants would fight, that I might not be handed over to the Jews; but my kingship is not from the world' (John 18:36).

It is apparent from these quotes that the early church went out with great gladness, great assurance that Christ was on the throne of God and reigning. Authority had been given unto him so that he could send his people into all the world proclaiming the gospel. It would do well for us to continually ponder Christ's active Kingship and so proclaim it.

The Kingdom of God is the Father's Kingdom

The Kingdom is the Kingdom of God. There is no such entity as 'the Kingdom', a power situation which is dynamic within itself. It is God Who is powerful, and the power of the Kingdom is the power of God Himself. In our last paragraph we saw that Christ is the power and authority of the Kingdom, but whereas it is 'the Kingdom of the Son of man', it is first the Kingdom of the Father and the Kingship is delegated to the Son. Thus in Luke 22:28–29 Jesus speaks of the Father appointing to him a Kingdom: 'You are those who have continued with me in my trials; and I assign to you, as my Father assigned to me, a kingdom'. In Ephesians 5:5 Paul speaks of 'the kingdom of Christ and of God', and in Revelation 11:15 we read:

Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, 'The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever'.

The Sermon on the Mount is filled with references to the Father and His Kingdom. First Corinthians 15:24–28 is the key to Christ's present reigning, his defeat of the enemies under the enablement of the Father, and finally Christ's delivering the Kingdom to the Father, 'that God may be everything to every one', or, 'that God may be all in all'.

This is immensely encouraging to those who proclaim the Kingdom. The kingdom of the world cannot maintain itself. It is taken up into the Kingdom of God, its evil dissolved, and all is made to be subject to God.

Entrance into the Kingdom Determines the Manner of Mode of (a) Living in It and (b) Proclaiming It

Those who proclaim the Kingdom cannot properly do so unless they are living in the Kingdom in accordance with its Kingdom principles. These principles are well set out in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. chs 5 – 11). We say 'principles' and not 'prescriptions'. To be under the King is a great act of grace on the part of God, both in giving us entrance into the Kingdom, and then so relating to us that we live the life that He has given us in Christ and His Spirit. In Matthew 18:1–4 Jesus makes it clear that unless one humbles himself as a little child

he cannot enter the Kingdom of God. A child in society is no ‘great one’. In the Kingdom of heaven greatness is seen in serving. He who does not strive to be master but is glad to serve has greatness. Christ comes into the world not to be served but to serve. Humility is the hall-mark of the Kingdom.¹¹ Christ shows the humility of the Kingdom in the passage of Philippians 2:1–11. Paul enjoins his readers to (i) ‘in humility count others better than yourselves’, and (ii) look not to your own interests but to the interests of others.¹² Christ showed that the way of himself—and thus of the Kingdom—is humility. It is true that God raised him up to be both Lord and Christ (Acts 2:36), and in this Philippian chapter to be Lord over all, but the Christ who was made King was the Christ who inherently was humble. Humility was his hallmark. In Revelation chapter 5 Christ is the Lamb that had been slain, but at the same time the powerful Lion of Judah.

From all this we deduce that Christ’s defeat of evil by the Cross was his demeanour before God and Man, namely that of humility and serving. Thus to live in the Kingdom is to be humble. ‘The kingdom of God is not [matters of] food and drink, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.’ Thus it can be called ‘The kingdom of the Son of his love’ (Col. 1:13), and it is right to say that the criteria of the Kingdom are the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22–23).

To proclaim the Kingdom, then, we must let go all matters of pride—of seeking to build our own kingdom, of being Nimrods and Lamechs and proud Nebuchadnezzars; becoming like Christ in his death (Phil. 3:10) as did Stephen, the first witness to be killed. He showed his Master in the forgiveness of those who were killing him and said, ‘Lord Jesus, receive my spirit’. As we live in the Kingdom in the Spirit, our ministry will be authentic, a true proclamation of the gospel of the Kingdom.

CONCLUSION: KNOWING THE MATTER OF THE KINGDOM AND SO PROCLAIMING IT

We have not exactly come up with a formula for proclamation. We have seen that what we call the gospel, as in ‘the good news’ or the *kerugma*, is what we preach. However, it is knowing that we are proclaiming the Lordship or Kingship of Christ which assists us because we know he is King of this age as well as the one to come. It is knowing that the victory over the kingdom of darkness has been won, and that it is now being worked out to its completion so that the Kingdom will then have come in all its fullness. Both Jesus and the dying thief recognised that Christ’s ‘kingly power’ and the New Eden are one and the same thing. It simply remains to say that all believers have entered the Kingdom of God, but have not yet inherited it. Warnings are issued in the Epistles which alert us against taking the coming inheritance for granted. Paul says that those who do certain things shall never inherit the Kingdom of God (cf. Gal. 5:19–21; 6:7–8; Eph. 5:5–6). All our devoted attention, then, should be on Christ the glorious King and His Father the King of love, and in the constant contemplation of them we can go on living in the Kingdom and proclaiming it to all the world.

¹¹ R. T. France in his book *Divine Government* (Lancer, 1990), subtitled *God’s Kingship in the Gospel of Mark*, has a good commentary in his section ‘The Overturning of Human Values’, pp. 48–52. In footnote 12 (cf. p. 116) he discusses the matter of humility and simple reception of the Kingdom via the picture of a child. It is quite an illumination of the humility of the Kingdom life.

¹² Philippians 2:4 does not have ‘not only’ as in the RSV and other versions. It is argued that it is implicit in the Greek, but surely to put another before one’s self is Paul’s meaning here. It was exactly what Christ did in his incarnation.

Comprehending the Son of God, Also Known as 'The Word' Who Became Man

INTRODUCTION TO THE SUBJECT

The study of Jesus Christ, the man born of Mary at Bethlehem and later known as 'Jesus of Nazareth', is called Christology. For some this theological work starts at Christ's Resurrection, for Peter on the day of Pentecost emphasised that Jesus' Resurrection was the basis on which 'God has made him both Lord and Christ'. 'Lord' and 'Christ' are powerful terms in the New Testament; 'Lord' being used in the Old Testament for God (Yahweh), and 'Christ' meaning he was the Messiah foretold in the Old Testament writings. What we have to keep in mind is that Christ did much work before the Resurrection, and much after it. He is still working as Messiah and Lord. A full Christology takes in all the work the one called 'Jesus' as a human has done, that is, his Incarnation, Ministry, Cross, Resurrection, Ascension, Reigning in heaven over all creation, and his Parousia or Final Coming.

Yet, that is not all. It is shown in the New Testament that before his birth at Nazareth—his becoming man—he worked in the times of creation and all history, not excepting in the life of Israel. We will try to show this work in another study. Yet we have to go further back and see that the one we call Jesus—and who was not then Jesus—worked with the Father and the Holy Spirit before creation and then in creation. What we have to say is that there was a time when there was no Jesus the man, but there was that one called 'the Logos' (the Word) and also 'the Son', meaning 'the Son of God'.

The conclusion to this study will be that before time—that is, the creation of the world—the Triune God planned what would happen in time and the *telos* or climax of the history of creation. In this sense, then, we say that a true Christology must include in it this action before time, as well as the work of the Son-Logos from creation to the incarnation of Christ. It has always been difficult for theologians—indeed for us all—to think of the Logos-Son not being Jesus Christ until his becoming flesh at Bethlehem. The only way we can resolve this difficulty—at least to some degree—is to say that he who was Logos and Son had personal self-consciousness of his being as a member of the Trinity. This Person became flesh, that is, became human as the son of Mary and her conception of him, virginally, by the power of the Holy Spirit. When God attested to him at his baptism, 'This is my beloved Son', He was attesting to one who was indissolubly human and Divine; who was both man and God.

The way we will go about this study will be to present the biblical doctrine of the Logos and that of the Son of God, before time, and to see that the man Jesus had consciousness that he had been sent by the Father into the world, and knew his origins, and knew the plan the Father had for creation, including his own part in that plan. As Paul later called him, he was 'the man from heaven', and although he took upon himself humanity as we know it, he was not confined to what we call 'Adamic humanity', any more than he ceased to be the Son of God.

THE WORD (LOGOS) OF GOD WHO ONCE WAS NOT MAN

These are words written about the Logos (Word) of God in John's Gospel chapter 1 and verses 1 to 5. They do not describe a man, but one who was more than a man because he had created everything that existed and now exists:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God; all things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

From the passage we gather the Word has being, and personal being because the personal pronoun is used concerning him. 'The Word was with God', *hen pros ton theon*, which literally means at least 'in the presence of God', and otherwise 'the Word was towards God', or again 'The Word was face-to-face with God'. There can be no doubt of the relational intimacy. Then the statement 'and the Word was God' leaves no doubt. The Word is so one with God that he is God.

The thrust of the first sentence is, 'When the beginning was (began) the Word already was'. He was there in the beginning with God and the beginning is really the beginning of the act of creation—when creation was coming into being. All things were made through the Word and nothing was created—not one thing—apart from him. In him was life, however and wherever that life may—or may not—have come to him. Without him mankind would be in darkness, but his life brought light to mankind whom he had created.

Having given this description of the Word of God, John then says, 'And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father' (John 1:14). In this verse he is telling us that the Word which was present at the beginning of creation and through whom all creation came into existence—and keeps coming into existence—became, at a certain time in history, a human being. Until he became that human being—Jesus of Nazareth—that human being never existed. The Word became a human being is the message. How that could have happened and did happen is not discussed. When we look at Jesus of Nazareth we are looking at the Word of God. If we ask, 'How can this be?' then we are faced with the fact that since this matter is unique and has no precedent or antecedent then we cannot know.

WORDS ABOUT THE SON OF GOD WHO ONCE WAS NOT MAN

In Hebrews 1:1–3 we read:

In many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets; but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. He reflects the glory of God and bears the very stamp of his nature, upholding the universe by his word of power. When he had made purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.

The passage points to one through whom God created the world. That one was 'a Son' or just 'Son'. Not only did God create through him but the Son also upholds the entire universe by his powerful word, that is, his utterance (*to rhemati dunameos*). Here this one is not called 'the Word' but is denoted as 'Son', a Son of God if not *the* Son of God. In John 1:14 the Word was designated—'we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father'. The sentence would appear to say that the one who became human was and is the Son of God.

In I Corinthians 8:6 we read, 'yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist'. In Pauline language 'one God, the Father' has two meanings: (i) 'the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ', and (ii) 'our Father', that is, the Father of those who become His children by grace. Without doubt, in this text Paul is pointing to the Father and the Son as linked with creation and the constant sustaining of that creation. We note that Paul has no problem with what we might call the pre-incarnate Person who is the Son and seeing him as continuant with Jesus.¹

¹ W. Norman Pittenger in his *The Word Incarnate: A Study of the Doctrine of the Person of Christ* (James Nisbet & Co., Welwyn, 1959) pp. 216–17, says:

Now who is it that has 'become man' in the Incarnation? Despite a very common misunderstanding it is not the Jesus of history seen as possessed of a full humanity with that individuation which means that we have in him a genuine human personality, Jesus as a Man did not pre-exist his conception and birth. The Eternal Word or Son, the second hypostasis of the holy Trinity who is God, did pre-exist; and the doctrine of the Incarnation is the way in which the theology of the Church declares that this Eternal Word has identified himself in unequalled manner with the human life which by the operation of the Holy Ghost was conceived and born of Mary.

In Colossians 1:15–17 we have a significant passage which speaks of the creating of all things:

He is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation; for in him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.²

What immediately becomes clear is that here we have similar teaching to that in John 1:1–5, Hebrews 1:1–3, and I Corinthians 8:6. ‘The first-born of all creation’ seems to indicate that this person, ‘the image of the invisible God’, was the first creature to be created. No, he could not be a creature who created, since no creature can create: ‘the first-born’ means the one who has pre-eminence, as in Revelation 1:5, ‘the first-born of the dead and ruler of kings on earth’. This one who is the image of God is the one in whom all things were created. They were not only created in, but also ‘through him and for him’. ‘Through’ shows that he was the agency for creation’ and ‘for him’ means ‘unto him’, that is, with him in view. That he was not created is shown by ‘He is before all things, and in him all things hold together’. That is, they subsist in him and by him.

Again, here we are shown one who is not the Father, but who is the image of the Father. In Hebrews this one was described as the one who ‘reflects the glory of God and bears the very stamp of his nature’. Yet in all four cases ‘the Word’ or ‘the Son’ was not a human being, but one intimately related to ‘God’ or ‘the Father’. As such he can be no less nor more than God. In John 1:18 we read, ‘No one has ever seen God; the only Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has made him known’. In some translations ‘the only Son’ is ‘the only God’.

We are not trying to resolve the problem of this material of the New Testament, which seems to have no parallel in the Old Testament, that is, the problem about there having to be ‘a Son’ or ‘the Word’ to create with the Father. It is true that in Proverbs 8:22–31 there is Wisdom personified, who claims to have been created ‘at the beginning of his work’, but nothing is served by identifying this one directly with the Word or the Son. In Isaiah 48:16 we have the interesting statement, ‘“Draw near to me, hear this: from the beginning I have not spoken in secret, from the time it came to be I have been there.” And now the Lord GOD has sent me and his Spirit.’ Certainly the Speaker—God—closes His message at verse 16a and another, mysterious speaker talks of God as having sent him in 16b, and this almost certainly refers to Israel the Servant, one who is spoken to and speaks in the latter section of Isaiah.

In the Old Testament the Spirit of God is said to have worked in the action of creation. This is clear from passages such as Psalm 104:30, ‘When thou sendest forth thy Spirit, they are created; and thou renewest the face of the ground’; and Job 33:4, ‘The spirit of God has made me, and the breath of the Almighty gives me life’. The Spirit (*ruach*: breath, breeze, wind) was understood to have given life or breath to all creatures. Genesis 1:2 also speaks of the Spirit of God in creation, but it is doubtful whether the writers of the Old Testament gave a hypostasis—a being in itself—to the Holy Spirit. At this point of our discussion we are not so much concerned with finding the elements of the Christian Trinity in the Old Testament, so much as remarking that the Spirit to whom a hypostasis is accorded in the New Testament was somehow linked with creation.

We now have before us, for consideration, a being or person who was not a human being at the point of creation, who himself was not created, and who already was when creation was

² In this section of verses 15–16 there is no reference to the one being described as being ‘the Son’, but in verse 13 he is referred to as the Son and it is reasonable to carry the idea of the Son into the passage.

begun to be brought into being. This awesome being took part in creation with God Who is said to be the Father of this Creator–Being. It is indicated in all the texts that this Creator–Being became human—'became flesh'—and is to be identified with the one who came to be called 'Jesus of Nazareth'. All this we hold in our minds as we seek to understand the nature of this person and to comprehend his work from time immemorial to his incarnation, and then on to his completion of the work which he was said to have been about doing both in this world and what we call 'the next world'.

THE CLAIMS OF A MAN TO HAVE COME FROM HEAVEN

Here are words spoken by a man who was called 'Son of man', so that it would at least be clear he was truly human; truly a man. His title or name was 'Jesus of Nazareth'. The words were, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am'. Such words, if taken literally as being true, must mean that the man was existent before Abraham. This could not have been the case. No man has lived for thousands of years. Taken in their context in John's Gospel they mean, 'I, Jesus of Nazareth, was once not yet born into the world, yet I was in existence before Abraham'. The same Jesus spoke other intriguing words. Again, calling himself 'Son of man' which at the very least means 'a human being', he said, 'If I have told you earthly things, and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you heavenly things? No one has ascended into heaven but he who descended from heaven, the Son of man' (John 3:12, 13). Whatever these words mean they certainly indicate that the speaker believes he has come down from heaven. To add to this mystery, Jesus also spoke similar words, 'He who comes from above is above all; he who is of the earth belongs to the earth, and of the earth he speaks; he who comes from heaven is above all' (John 3:31); 'For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me' (John 6:38). What, then, shall we make of these words? We must say that this man, Jesus of Nazareth, believed he was once in heaven. He was either mistaken or what he said had happened, had really happened.

THE INTENTION OF GOD FROM ETERNITY TO ETERNITY

In the New Testament we are informed of God's intention, His intention formulated in His mind before He began to create the universe. On this basis there is, as we shall see, much spoken about God's plan. It seems that He did not create with no goal or purpose in mind. We might take it from the account of creation in Genesis chapters 1 and 2 that God had His purpose in creating Man, and creating him in His own image, the image being the revelation of the reality it images. The mandate given to Man does not seem merely to occupy him, but to call him to share in the purpose God has for creation as well as for Man. Much of this purpose is worked out from the nature of God, especially as the God of covenant. Before time He had planned the outcome of this covenant in accordance with His own covenantal nature. At this point we will not pursue this line of thinking but return to it later. That is, we will look at the whole gamut of God's plan which existed before time and its fulfilment to which it will come, in time.

God's Intention, Passage One: Ephesians 1:3–14

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. He destined us in love to be his sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace which he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace which he lavished upon us. For he has made known to us in all wisdom and insight the mystery of his will, according to his purpose which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fulness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. In him, according to the purpose of him who accomplishes all things according to the counsel of his will, we who first hoped in Christ have been destined and appointed to live for the praise of his glory. In him you also, who have heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and have believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, which is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.

In the matter of God's purpose—or purposes—according to New Testament thinking, we can find nothing more explicit than what is found in the first chapter of the Letter to the Ephesians.

The following elements constitute God's purpose/s for creation—God's intention 'before the foundation of the world':

- (a) *That we in Christ should be holy and blameless before Him* (1:4). This means that He would have all His creatures known as 'the elect' to be utterly holy in His very presence. This purpose would proceed from His own holiness.
- (b) *That we should be His sons through Jesus Christ* (1:5). Whilst He had only one begotten Son, the one who had created the world, yet He would have certain human beings to become sons, especially as (i) they were to come to 'the liberty of the glory of the sons of God' (Rom. 8:21), and so be (ii) 'conformed to the image of His Son, in order that he [the Son] might be the firstborn among many [such] brethren' (Rom. 8:29).
- (c) *That we should be 'to praise of his glorious grace which he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved'*. That is, that we should be saved by his blood—the riches of his grace which he lavished upon us' (1:5–8; cf. 2:7). This action of grace was to proceed from His Being as Redeemer.
- (d) *That as a plan for the fullness of time He would unite all things in Christ, things in heaven and things on earth.* This bringing Christ to unify all things is the same as Christ reconciling all things (Col. 1:19–21), filling up all things (Eph. 4:10), and bringing all things together in harmony (Col. 3:14).
- (e) *That they who first hoped in Christ—the Jews—should live for the praise of His glory.* This would spring from God's character as Creator, whereby Man was made in His image to be to the praise of God (Gen. 1:26–27; Ps. 8:5–8; I Cor. 11:7).
- (f) *That those who also believed in Him—the Gentiles—should be to the praise of His glory.* He is not the God of the Jews only, but also the God of Gentiles (Rom. 3:29). He would have Man as His image be to His glory, that is, to show—reflect—God as He is.

Our commentary on these elements is that God's plan issues from His Nature as Holy, as Creator, as Father and as Redeemer:

- (a) *That we should be holy as He intended springs from the fact that He is Holy* (cf. Isa. 6:3; Rev. 4:8), that His plan is to sanctify (i) elect Man (Heb. 10:10–14), and (ii) the whole creation (Rev. 21:2, 22–27), and this is supported by the statements 'be holy for I am holy' (Lev. 11:44f.; I Pet. 1:15f.).
- (b) *That we should be His sons issues from and is supported by the reality that He is Father*, that is, not like a Father, but He is the Father of 'every family in heaven and on earth' (Eph. 3:14–15), and as 'one God and Father of us all, who is above all and through all and in all' (4:6), He intends to fill out His Fatherhood by creating the Holy Family, the Church. As in Isaiah 43:1–7 He will have His children whom He 'created for my [His] glory, whom [He] formed and made'.
- (c) *His plan to redeem the world which He loves (John 3:16) springs from the fact that He is love (I John 4:8, 16) and 'the God of all grace'* (I Pet. 5:10; Eph. 1:7–8; 2:7–10; cf. Rom. 5:12–21). This thrust of His Fatherhood in creating 'many sons' is outlined in many places, such as Romans 8:14–30, Galatians 4:4–7 and Revelation 21:7. That the elect sons of Jews and Gentiles should be to the praise of His glory, springs from His Being as Creator–Father, for He will have His creation know that Man shall be His image, through His image in Christ the True image. Thus, in Christ, they will reflect the nature of the God Who is Father (see (b) above).

Here we simply note that it is out of His nature as Creator–Father–Redeemer that His intention for His creation springs and is formed. At the same time it is highly important to note that the fulfilment of that intention He does not intend, and will not fulfil without Christ. Note that the Ephesian passage under consideration speaks of ‘in Christ’, ‘in him’, ‘through Jesus Christ’, and ‘in the Beloved’, ‘In him we have redemption’, and the plan is ‘in Christ’ and it is ‘to unite all things in him’. It is for both Jews and Gentiles to believe and be given the inheritance.

We draw the important conclusion, that the Father’s intention was in the Divine relationship of the Father and the Son, before time, and that the Two Persons had the one mind on the matter and in this, as we will show, was the Holy Spirit also. The intention was Trinitarian and to be fulfilled by the Three Persons as one (Triune) God. We are therefore justified in saying that he who was Son and Word was one in the work of the Father and the Spirit before time. In order to understand his work we must not think of it as just beginning at his incarnation, but that what he was about before time, continued in time before his incarnation as Jesus of Nazareth and flowed on to the events of his Ministry, his Cross, Resurrection, Ascension, Reigning and will be completed at his Parousia.

God’s Intention, Passage Two: II Timothy 1:9–10

Let us examine the text:

... who saved us and called us with a holy calling, not in virtue of our works but in virtue of his own purpose and the grace which he gave us in Christ Jesus ages ago, and now has manifested through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.

‘Ages ago’ (*pro chronon aionion*) is variously translated ‘before the ages began’, ‘before the world began’, ‘from all eternity’, and ‘before the beginning of time’. We are then in the situation where God’s intention was in the mind of God. It was then He purposed calling us with a holy calling and it was then He did according to His purpose ‘in Christ Jesus’. This is all in the ethos of Ephesians chapter 1. Its fulfilment, again, was to be ‘through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus’. It would entail ‘abolish[ing] death and bring[ing] life and immortality to light’.

God’s Intention, Passage Three: I Corinthians 2:7–10

But we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glorification. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. None of the rulers of this age understood this; for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But, as it is written, ‘What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him,’ God has revealed to us through the Spirit.

God’s divine intention for Man, whom He created, was his glorification. This was to come through ‘the Lord of glory’, Christ. What God has planned in this glorification is beyond imagining and its like has never been seen or heard by Man.

God’s Intention, Passage Four: Colossians 1:24–27

Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I complete what is lacking in Christ’s afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church, of which I became a minister according to the divine office which was given to me for you, to make the word of God fully known, the mystery hidden for ages and generations but now made manifest to his saints. To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

This is linked with the previous reference in regard to glorification, and emphasises in particular the glorification of the Gentiles. It is interesting to see that the mystery of God’s

plan always was, but it was hidden to previous generations (that is, Israel) and now is opened. Ephesians 3:4–6 speaks of the mystery of the plan of God which was opened to Paul by Christ (cf. Gal. 1:12):

When you read this you can perceive my insight into *the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations* as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; that is, how the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel (emphasis mine).

Romans 16:25–26 should also be read in this respect, of the mystery of the plan being unveiled:

Now to him who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of *the mystery which was kept secret for long ages but is now disclosed* and through the prophetic writings is made known to all nations, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith.

We note that ‘through the prophetic writings’ must mean those of the Old Testament, but I Peter 1:10–12 tells us that the prophets did not understand wholly what they were proclaiming.

God’s Intention, Passage Five: Ephesians 3:7–11

Of this gospel I was made a minister according to the gift of God’s grace which was given me by the working of his power. To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to make all men see what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things; that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places. This was according to the eternal purpose which he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord.

This passage is in some way repeating the material we saw in Intention Four, especially regarding the mystery of the plan as it is worked out regarding Israel and the Gentile nations. In our present quote we see ‘what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things’. Here, ‘who created all things’ must be included because it has significance in being linked with ‘the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God’. The plan of the mystery is the reason for creation; the plan of the mystery is innate to creation. In a way it is the *raison d’être* of creation. It is what God is about in history. Revelation chapter 10 needs to be looked at in this regard, for it depicts a ‘mighty angel’ who stands with one foot on the sea and the other on the land, and a few verses down the angel swears by Him Who created the heavens and the earth:

... that there should be no more delay, but that in the days of the trumpet call to be sounded by the seventh angel, the mystery of God, as he announced to his servants the prophets, should be fulfilled (Rev. 10:6–7).

God’s Intention of the Cross, Passages Revelation 13:8 and I Peter 1:18–20

... and all who dwell on earth will worship it, every one whose name has not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb that was slain (Rev. 13:8).

Here we take a slightly different tack in our reasoning. The verse before us appears to say that names were written in the Lamb’s book of life before the foundation of the world. Other versions have something like this one of the *NKJV*: ‘All who dwell on the earth will worship him, whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world’. This translation is well attested. Whatever the case, the intention of God *before the foundation of the world* is shown in regard to the slaying of the Lamb.

... knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you (I Pet. 1:18–20).

The last sentence of this quote is clear enough. He who was predestined to be the Lamb became that in time.

The Father and the Son One in the Plan and Intention of God, as Shown in John 17

John chapter 17 warrants a full treatment on its own. Christ's high-priestly prayer points back to the fellowship of the Father in glory before time, God's plan in time for time, the intercession of the Son for the immediate band of believers and then for the church which would grow from their word. It prays for the unity-in-communion of the church, and looks to the church seeing the Son in his heavenly glory and being participators in that. Verses 4 and 5 cover Christ's present fulfilment of God's plan—intention—and pray for glorification:

I glorified thee on earth, having accomplished the work which thou gavest me to do; and now, Father, glorify thou me in thy own presence with the glory which I had with thee before the world was made.

Here, if ever, is disclosed the relationship of the Father and the Son before time. Verses 22–24 speak of the love of the Father for the Son, and the glory the Father has given to the Son out of that love. These words are moving indeed. They seem to show all we need of the Pre-incarnate Person of the Son. No wonder he prays for the church that it may ultimately be present in his eternal glory, that they might behold that glory.

The Intention of the Father for the Son, as Seen in Philippians 2:1–11

In our next study but one, we will deal with Christ's Incarnation, so that this passage before us really belongs to that study. Without discussing the *kenosis*—the self-emptying of the Son—we can see that the deity of the Son is set forth: being 'in the form of God, [he] did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped'. This whole passage has been widely debated, but surely its thrust is that God has planned His Son should become Man and die on the Cross for the world. The exaltation of the man Jesus to be Lord and Christ 'to the glory of the Father' shows not only the Father's intention, but also the execution of that in time. As in John 17, we are in that wonderful—indeed glorious—era of the action of the Godhead before time began.

General Elements of the Intention of God for Creation

Under this heading we would gather up most of the Scriptures. First John 3:6 says Christ was manifested at the end-times to destroy the works of the Devil—this was the intention, and what a vast work it entailed. It brings to mind the Lion of Judah, the Lamb that had been slain of Revelation 5, who pursues Satan and his host to the bitter end. John 3:17 says God sent His Son into the world not to judge but to save the world, and this speaks before the act of that saving. The 'must' of Christ's Death and Resurrection in Mark 8:31, 9:31, 10:32, and Luke 24:26, 44, all point to the predestined plan about to be fulfilled. They also indicate that this was the essence of the prophetic text, a principle continued in many of the passages we have already quoted from the New Testament.

In the Old Testament the principle of God planning and executing His own plan is made clear in passages such as Isaiah 46:5–13, and 48:3–5. They sum up the principle of Psalm 135:6, 'Whatever the LORD pleases he does, in heaven and on earth, in the seas, and all deeps'.

Remember this and consider, recall it to mind, you transgressors, remember the former things of old; for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, 'My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose,' calling a bird of prey from the east, the man of my counsel from a far country. I have spoken, and I will bring it to pass; I have purposed, and I will do it (Isa. 46:8–11).

The former things I declared of old, they went forth from my mouth and I made them known; then suddenly I did them and they came to pass. Because I know that you are obstinate, and your neck is an iron sinew and your forehead brass, I declared them to you from of old, before they came to pass I announced them to you, lest you should say, 'My idol did them, my graven image and my molten image commanded them' (Isa. 48:3–5).

This principle of a predestined plan is strong throughout the Old and New Testament writings. Without foreknowledge, ordination and predestination we have no true God of both Testaments, difficult as some folk find the principle, but predestination presupposes God's planning before time.

The Time Before Time, and the Activity of the Word, of the Son

In the few pages of this study we have come a long way from our first speaking of the Logos and the Son. Only sustained contemplation and deep meditation—all mixed with awe and holy fear—will bring us into the understanding that the Persons and work of the Trinity transcend even the most devoted elements of our worship and understanding. Creation cannot be encapsulated in our minds. The intentions of love and grace for humanity surpass our understanding. Well Paul said it, 'But, as it is written, "What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him"'. He added of these things that, 'God has revealed [these things] to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God' (I Cor. 2:9–10). So incredible are these things and the whole intention of God that Paul was forced to cry out:

O the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! 'For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?' 'Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?' For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory for ever. Amen (Rom. 11:33–36).

This brings us now to the conclusion of what we set out to do in introducing the work and ministry of the Logos, the Son, the One who has always worked in the Trinitarian work which we call *opera ad extra*, the work of the economic Trinity. Out of the internal work and relationships of the ontological Trinity comes this great work of creation, redemption and the final sanctification, glorification and perfection of all things, that which we call the glorious *telos* of creation. For this work not to be predestined, to be only arbitrary—off the cuff—would be unbelievable. No, it was in the heart of God before the creation of all things. The Divine Intention has always been impeccable.

As we have studied and declared the Scriptures throughout our life, we have come to see that nothing that happens in time was not planned before time. The great work of the Three Persons was their mind of intention. We are filled with wonderment, we are helpless before the plan which is shown in the protological elements, such as the creation of Man, the making of Eden, the plan to Edenise the world—to spread from that holy, worshipful centre to the ends of the earth, and to bring its joys and beauties and substantial character to all mankind and all the earth. We have seen the wisdom of God in His love and grace which not only surmounts the foul deeds of the Serpent and the wretchedness of Man's disloyalty and deceit, but ultimately through the work of Christ brings the creation to its glorious end, for with Christ, the Father and the Holy Spirit are ever working assiduously.

Our whole point is that the Person and Work of Him who came to be called 'Jesus'—who is Jesus, the Lord and Christ, the King of the eternal Kingdom, the veritable Alpha and

Omega—cannot be understood if we meet him only in the Incarnation. We must meet him before time and there behold his glory and see the beauty and intimacy of his love for creation. We must see him as one with the Father as they are of one mind for the making and welfare of creation. Nothing happens in ‘the days of his flesh’ which did not have its genesis before creation, its beginning in creation, its continuance throughout the history of the human race, and its situation in the eternal covenant of God. He was not static in time until the hour of incarnation arrived, and that we must well see. It is not only that ‘A second Adam to the fight and to the rescue came’, for that Adam was not waiting in the wings until the hour of the Kingdom’s coming—he was ever in the warp and woof of the plan as it moved towards his incarnation and it is ever towards its climax.

If we get caught on any one or two or more aspects of the history of salvation we will miss the big picture, the broadest views. Then we will diminish the sovereignty of God and the vast majesty of the Son and the mighty power of the Spirit. We will miss the wonder of God’s plan and intention as we will miss knowing the heart of the Triune God. We will not fully know what it will mean to be ultimately inducted into the very heart of the Triune God Himself.

Christ in All the Scriptures: The Pre-Incarnate Yet Always Coming Christ

INTRODUCTION; CHRIST AND ALL THE SCRIPTURES

In this series on Christology our intention is to cover the Person and Work of Christ from beginning to end. In our former study we spoke of what has been called Christ's pre-existence. This term is not quite adequate because until the birth of Jesus of Nazareth there had been no one who was the Christ. We saw that there had always been 'the Word' and 'the Son of God'. Indeed these were the One. This One became human when conceived through the power of the Spirit and was born a babe at the first Christmas.

What is fascinating is that Paul can use the term 'Christ' of the Second Member of the Trinity. In I Corinthians 10:1-5 we see this.

I want you to know, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, and all ate the same supernatural food and all drank the same supernatural drink. For they drank from the supernatural Rock which followed them, and the Rock was Christ. Nevertheless with most of them God was not pleased; for they were overthrown in the wilderness.

It is the statement 'the Rock was Christ' that catches our attention. If we think of Jesus as being the Christ, and he, as a man, did not pre-exist his birth, then Paul is telling us this one who was Word and Logos was always existent, and was in action in the Old Testament. Our theological commonsense tells us that since the Word-Son was always existent and was in the work of creation, then it is obvious that he has always been in all the works of the world. This fits perfectly with New Testament theology and Paul's in particular. He is really saying 'the Rock was Christ' ie. the One who was always the Son of God. In the sense that the Father and the Holy Spirit are in all the Scriptures so was the Word-Son. This is an important conclusion. It leads us to two points we need to realise and understand, (i) the testimony of Christ to the Scriptures and (ii) the testimony of the Scriptures to Christ. Both are important for we realise that Christ's being in all the Scriptures as in important testimony. It is not just a testimony to the man Jesus's reading of the Scriptures and his assent to them, but a testimony of the One of whom the Scriptures spoke— 'The testimony of Jesus is the spirit (Spirit?) of prophecy' (Rev. 19:10).¹

¹ There is a number of books which relate to the Christology of the Old Testament. Very helpful is A. M. Hodgkin's *Christ in All the Scriptures* (IVP, Eighth Edition 1936). This still has great value. E. W. Hengstenberg's *Christology of the Old Testament* (Kregel Publications, 1970). This was first published in London in 1847. In its day it was considered quite scholarly and Walter Kaiser speaks highly of it in a Foreword. Because prophecy is one the main emphases of this present book three classics are useful in exploring out subject. The first is Patrick Fairbairn's *The Interpretation of Prophecy* (Banner of Truth, 1964, a reprint of the Second Edition of 1865), the second is *Old Testament Prophecy* by A. B. Davidson (T. & T. Clarke, 1904) regarded even today as a classic, and the third is J. Lindblom's *Prophecy in Ancient Israel* (Fortress Press 1962) which is a classic on the subject. Closer to our time is E. Early Ellis's *Prophecy and Hermeneutic in Early Christianity* (Eerdmans, 1978), and Philip Edgecombe Hughes' *Interpreting Prophecy* (Eerdmans 1980). My little *Is Prophecy For Today?* (NCPI) could also prove helpful.

THE TESTIMONY OF CHRIST TO THE SCRIPTURES

When we read the four Gospels it is clear to us that Christ had great reverence for the Scriptures. He believed them and attested to them as authentic. The grasp he had on them came undoubtedly from his reading of them, his being a Jew of his time, his dependence upon them as being the Word and words of God, and his discovery of himself in them. We cannot here enter into the subject of his self-conscious of being the Son of God and the promised Messiah, and his discovery of that fact. We must also take into account the fact that he was ‘that prophet’ of whom Moses spoke in Deuteronomy 18:15— ‘The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brethren--him you shall heed’. Jesus was *a* prophet and *the* prophet and so have the prophetic sense, this is essential for fully understanding the Scriptures. We could claim that his hermeneutic was perfect, but that might be begging the question of the Old Testament ought to be read.

Whatever the case, he testified to the Scriptures. Statements like ‘Abraham rejoiced to see my day’, ‘You search the scriptures... and it is they that bear witness to me’, ‘Moses wrote of me’ tell us that the Scriptures testified to him and this matter we will discuss in the section below. In testifying to the Scriptures it mean that they testified to him. If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote of me. 47 But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe my words?” (John 5:46, 47). Speaking of the principle of Corban Jesus rebuked the hard, traditional way of keeping it which was against its true meaning, ‘thus making void the word of God through your tradition which you hand on. And many such things you do.’ (Mark 7:13).

In the temptation in Matthew’s gospel Jesus answers the Devil in the words of Deuteronomy 8:3; 6:13; 6:16. Satan uses the term ‘It is written,’ but Jesus countered him with his own ‘It is written’. Satan gave testimony to the authority of Scripture. Jesus highlighted the wrong for which Satan quoted it, by giving his own, true knowledge of the text and its meaning. In Luke 4: 17–21 Jesus read the set lection of Isaiah 61:1–2 and said, ‘Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing’, thus attesting to its attesting of him. A quote here from A. M. Hodgson (op. cit. pp. 2–3) show how familiar Jesus was with the Scriptures.

He refers to twenty Old Testament characters. He quotes from nineteen different books. He refers to the creation of man, to the institution of marriage, to the history of Noah, of Abraham, of Lot, and to the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah as described in Genesis; to the appearing of God to Moses in the burning bush, to the manna, to the ten commandments, to the tribute money mentioned in Exodus. He refers to the ceremonial law for the purification of lepers, and to the great moral law, ‘Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself,’ both contained in Leviticus. To the brazen serpent and the law regarding vows, in Numbers...He refers to David’s flight to the high priest at Nob, to the glory of Solomon and the visit of the Queen of Sheba, to Elijah’s sojourn with the widow of Sarepta, to the healing of Naaman, and to the killing of Zechariah—from various historical books. And as regards the Psalms and the Prophetic writings, if possible the Divine authority of the Lord is yet more deeply stamped on them than on the rest of the Old Testament. ‘Have you not read?’ or ‘It is written,’ is the ground of Christ’ constant appeal ‘The Scripture cannot be broken,’ ‘the Scriptures testify of Me,’ ‘the Scriptures must be fulfilled,’ his constant assertion. Questioned concerning the resurrection, Jesus answered, *Have you not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead but of the living.*’

A very significant statement if that of Luke 18:31–32:

‘And taking the twelve, he said to them, “Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written of the Son of man by the prophets will be accomplished. For he will be delivered to the Gentiles, and will be mocked and shamefully treated and spit upon; they will scourge him and kill him, and on the third day he will rise.”’

The ‘everything that is written of the Son of man by the prophets will be accomplished’ is a powerful and comprehensive saying. What we must observe here—and we will amplify this

later—is that nothing the prophets have spoken will not be fulfilled and all that Christ has done has been prophetically set forth. As we have noted, the testimony of Christ to the Scriptures is also the Scriptures' testimony to Christ. Luke 22:37 is a direct reference to Isaiah 53:12:

“Therefore I will divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he poured out his soul to death, and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors. (Isaiah 53:12).

Matthew 26:31 refers to the prophecy of Zechariah 13:7:

“Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, against the man who stands next to me,” says the LORD of hosts. “Strike the shepherd, that the sheep may be scattered; I will turn my hand against the little ones,”

thus aligning it with that significant OT chapter. Again in verses 53 and 54 is another significant statement, ‘Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then should the scriptures be fulfilled, that it must be so?’ He is really saying that if he made a decision to have twelve legions of angels come to his then he would be subverting the Scripture ‘that it must be so’, ie. that the matter of the Cross and resurrection *must* be so, must come to pass, must be fulfilled.

Three of his last utterances—those on the Cross,—were those which pointed to fulfilment of the Scriptures, ‘My God, my God, why has thou forsaken me?’ (Psa. 22:1: Matt. 27:46), ‘I thirst!’ (Psa. 69:21: John 19:28). ‘Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit’ (Psa. 31:5; Luke 23:46). These utterances and Christ’s other testimonies to the Scriptures took place before his death. After his death we have the passages of Luke 24:25–27 and Luke 24:44–27. If some would say of his views of the Scripture that they were limited by his humanity, by the Jewish training he had received, then surely they would have to say of him in his resurrection that his view of the Scripture would be truly reliable. In the first passage he says:

‘And he said to them, “O foolish men, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?” And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.’ (Luke 24:27).

Now, ‘O foolish men, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken!’ becomes greatly significant. It tells us that Christ’s disciples had every reason to believe that the Old Testament Scriptures had made everything clear about the Christ with whom, they had companied. The key word in the next part of his action—‘he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself’— is the word ‘interpreted’. They needed interpretation of these passages because they had not understood them in the way Christ now described them. Again the second passage of 24:44–47 speaks of Jesus saying, ‘These are my words which I spoke to you, while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and the psalms must be fulfilled.’ Then, we are told, ‘he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures’, that is, an act took place by which their hitherto unseeing minds could not see. Then he was able to say, ‘That is, he had said prior to his death that the Scriptures concerning him must be fulfilled. ‘Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead’.

We cannot but conclude that they—like the two disciples on the road to Emmaus—were reprehensible for not understanding what the Scriptures had said of him. Of course Jesus does not leave them to deal with their reprehensibility, but assist them to understand, for their hearts even if ‘slow to believe’ were not hardened against the truth. We have to keep coming back to what he had formerly told them, ‘To you is *given* to understand the mystery (mysteries) of the kingdom of God’. Thus they would understand.

THE TESTIMONY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT SCRIPTURES TO CHRIST

John 5:30 says clearly enough of the Scriptures, ‘it is they who bear witness to me’. In the same breath he says it is Moses who bears witness of him, whatever we may understand by Moses, which seems to have meant ‘the law’.

We need to comprehend the principle of the Scriptures testifying to Christ. It is not really until the day of his Resurrection that Christ shows that principle to the apostles, for by this time the events of the Cross and the Resurrection have happened and so the fulfilment of the Scriptures can be seen. What is clear is that the Old Testament speaks of one who will be the seed of woman and crush the serpent’s head, whilst his own heel will be bruised (Gen 3:15; cf. Heb. 2:14–15). In Genesis 49:10 is one of the tribe of Judah who will possess the sceptre of kingship and ‘to him will be the obedience of the nations. Yet another is the seed of Abraham by which nations shall bless themselves (Gen. 22:18; Gal. 3:16). There is a personage in Isaiah 7:14 (cf. Matt. 1:23 *passim*) who is called Immanuel—‘God with us’, and in Isaiah 9:6–7 a great personage who is described in terms which equal deity—‘The mighty God, the everlasting Father’—and yet he is the man given to ‘us’ ie. Israel. In Isaiah 11:1—there is one who is ‘the stem of Jesse’ ie. of Davidic descent and he has much in common with the person/s of the two previous Isaianic prophecies and particularly so in unique wisdom or counsel. Isaiah chapters 40–66 speak of a personage who is called ‘the servant of the LORD’, and such a one could be aligned with Christ who spoke of his own ministry as a servant (Mark 10:45), whilst Paul, too, accorded him this ‘form’ (Phil. 2:5–8). In fact the number of references in this section of Isaiah quoted in the New Testament must be highly significant. Isaiah 40:3 and Matthew 3:3 speaks of this precursor of the coming LORD—the Servant—as being John the Baptist., whilst Malachi 3:1 is quoted of the same precursor. We also saw that this Servant ‘was numbered with the transgressors (Isa. 53:12; Luke 22:27) and Peter speaks of his crucifixion after the manner of 53:4–6 in I Peter 2:24.

In Micah 5:2ff. (cf. Matt. 2:6) Bethlehem is spoken of as the birthplace of a special personage who is to be Ruler of Israel and ‘great to the ends of the earth’. In all we can see that the Old Testament in various places speaks of a Personage who will rule. Without going into the matter of the interpretation of these passages by Jewish scholars before and after Christ’s Incarnation, Work, and Ascension, we ask whether the prophetic passages seemingly referring to a number of persons under the Names of ‘Righteous Branch’, ‘Stem of Jesse’, ‘Son of man’, ‘Seed of woman’, ‘Seed of Abraham’, ‘Ruler out of Judah’, ‘Davidic King’, ‘Everlasting Father’, ‘Prince of peace’, ‘Servant of the Lord’ and ‘Davidic Shepherd’—to name some²—are to be understood as *the One Person*. It would seem that this was not wholly the case with Jewish scholars, and certainly was not the case with the disciples as they followed him in his ministry and viewed the last events of his Cross and Resurrection. It does appear that the use of these prophecies in the early church is supported by some OT passages quoted substantially and others in a fragmentary manner. We have to remark that it is not so much that all these names, titles and personages are conflated as that they were intended to refer to Christ—‘The testimony of Jesus is the spirit (Spirit?) of prophecy’.

Concerning the Prophetic Text

This matter to be considered is, in its scope, far beyond including in the text of our book and we have dealt with something of it in ‘Appendix 1: The Prophetic Text’ We need at this point to understand, in essence, the nature of the prophetic text. We have seen enough of Old and New Testament texts which testify to Christ, as also those which are Christ’s own testimony to the Scriptures. He obviously felt it was a reasonable, indeed a valid expectation, that the two disciples on the road to Emmaus should understand from the Old

² I have given titles, some of which are not actual titles used in the prophecies alluded to. It has to be admitted that the New Testament never seems to doubt that all these prophecies are linked with the Person of Christ.

Testament Scriptures the meaning of the events of Incarnation, Ministry, the Cross and the Resurrection. ‘O, fools and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken!’ He then *interpreted* to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself, and, later did the same thing to the apostles in the upper room in Jerusalem. His words to that gathered group were, ‘These are my words which I spoke to you, while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and the psalms must be fulfilled’ (Luke 24:44). We gather from this that Jesus had not only foretold the events of the Cross, resurrection and Ascension but had almost certainly given them actual Scriptures related to those events, yet they had not understood. We say, again, that Christ had to come and fulfil the prophecies before they could be really understood. In fact, the tenor of the Acts and the Epistles is precisely that.

I Peter 1:10–12 is a good guide to this kind of thinking:

‘The prophets who prophesied of the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired about this salvation; they inquired what person or time was indicated by the Spirit of Christ within them when predicting the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glory. It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things which have now been announced to you by those who preached the good news to you through the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look’.

This should indicate to us that ‘the Spirit of Christ’ was in them, the Spirit who was one with Christ and spoke of him to and through the prophets. The Spirit of Christ must have been in all the prophets and inspired them. II Peter 1:16–21 should be studied closely. Verses 20 and 21 are very telling:

‘First of all you must understand this, that no prophecy of scripture is a matter of one’s own interpretation, because no prophecy ever came by the impulse of man, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God’.

No prophet reasoned the utterance he was to give, and all spoke by being moved by the Holy Spirit. We see it comports with Revelation 19:10, ‘The testimony of Jesus is the spirit (Spirit?) of prophecy’. By this we mean that the prophets have all testified to Christ: it is the heart of their message. ‘The testimony of Jesus’ includes his testimony to his Father, to the truth, to the Kingdom of God, to the law and prophets by what he was and by what he accomplished. The prophets testify to him and his nature by innumerable sayings and revelations.

It is quite clear that Paul makes certain claims that he understands and expounds the mysteries of God, of Christ, of the church, of the gathering in of the nations to God, telling us that these mysteries were not known or disclosed in previous generations. In Romans 16:25–26 we see his assertion that his gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ was ‘according to the revelation of the mystery which was kept secret for long ages but is now disclosed and through the prophetic writings is made known to all nations, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith’. We gather

(i) the mystery of the gospel is only now—in the apostolic age—fully disclosed, and

(ii) only ‘through the prophetic writings’ is both comprehended and made known to the nations.

Paul’s assertion which we have just discussed is of the most significant nature and highest importance. The Old Testament ‘law and prophets’ are the substance of the gospel which Christ himself has formed, and they are in their content and aim universal in nature. They are the basis of a proper proclamation of the gospel. This does not mean the New Testament writings are irrelevant for this is far from the case. They are themselves based upon the Old Testament, even to the point of shedding light on them, and they are—so to speak—the extended basis of proclaiming the gospel.

THE TESTIMONY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT SCRIPTURES TO CHRIST

At this point we can pick up some of the direct quotes and fragmentary ones in the New Testament which speak about Christ.³ The lamentation of Jeremiah 31:15 for Rachel's children is seen in Matthew 2:17, 18 as applying to Herod's massacre of the innocent children, and Hosea 11:1 which speaks of God calling His son—Israel—out of Egypt is applied in Matthew 2:15 to the child, Christ, being taken into and out of Egypt by Joseph and Mary. In John 2:17 Jesus quoted Psalm 69:9 of his feelings for his Father's house, 'Zeal for they house will consume me', and this is related to Mark 11:15 and the later purging of the temple, where Jesus said 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations' (Isa. 56:7; cf. Jer. 7:11). In his entry into Jerusalem on Psalm Sunday (Matt. 21:4–5) that act is understood in the light of Zechariah 9:9. Christ himself pointed the disciples to Zechariah 13:7–8 in Matthew 26:31, 'I will strike the shepherd and the sheep will be scattered'.

Psalms 22 and 69 when read closely certainly can be seen as though they have reference to the happenings at Christ's crucifixion. Christ makes intercession for the transgressors (Isa. 53:12; Luke 23:34) in his 'Father forgive them, for they know not what they do!' Other elements such as 'My God! My God! Why hast thou forsaken me?!' of Mark 15:34 is the first verse of Psalm 22. 'the 'They pierced by hand and my feet' of Psalm 22:16 is an act at the Cross. So is the matter of casting lots for his vesture (Psa. 22:18; John 19: 23, 24).

In regard to Christ's cry 'I thirst' John has an interesting presentation of the incident:

'After this Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said (to fulfil the scripture), "I thirst." A bowl full of vinegar stood there; so they put a sponge full of the vinegar on hyssop and held it to his mouth' (John 19:28, 29).

This may seem to be an artificial act but it is a deeply significant one, opening a principle which Jesus adhered to 'that the scripture might be fulfilled'. This principle should colour our understanding of all that Jesus did was 'in accordance with the scriptures'.

If we were to continue in this vein we would be again involved in material beyond conclusion in a small book. It would take us into the materials of Acts where the proclaimers depended upon the Old Testament Scriptures for their preaching the gospel, for it was on this they were judged by Jews and the 'God-fearers' of that time. The Epistles and the Revelation are heavily dependent upon the Old Testament. Indeed they cannot be fully understood without those Scriptures. Romans 16:26 with its statement that it is through the prophetic writings that the gospel is made known universally, prompts us to see that Christ is—as was—in all the Scriptures.

In this section of our book our conclusion is, then, the Old Testament is primarily about Christ, that its text is concerned with Christ, and that the New Testament is unintelligible apart from the Old. I would also like to sum up the three sections on Christ and the Old Testament Scriptures by saying that the text can be seen in the following ways.

- (a) Christ refers the whole of the Old Testament to himself. This concurs with Revelation 19:10, that the testimony of Jesus is the Spirit of prophecy.

- (b) That God's plan and intention is one whole story and whilst it is planned before time it begins in time and proceeds, as does the bible, from Genesis to Revelation without impediment.

³ Again I lean on A. M. Hodgson's convenient classifications of New testaments text which relate to those prophetic texts of the Old Testament. Hodgson does what I do not do, he interprets—correctly I believe—many of the Old Testament notions and modes of Messiah, as they present themselves in the life of Christ. He sees, for example, to meekness of Christ and his suffering which accord with Isaiah 53 even though the text is not explicitly applied to Jesus. He extends the Shepherd nature of Jesus to picking up the children in his arms as lambs (Isa. 40:11; Mark 10:16). I believe these are legitimate applications of the Old Testaments text, but covering all these is a vast study on its own.

- (c) The Old Testament and New Testament Scriptures both testify to Christ. Much of the Old Testament refers to Christ explicitly enough, but even that is not opened up until Christ has fulfilled his work from the Incarnation to the Ascension and reigning, and still, in part until his Parousia or Coming again to fulfil all things.
- (d) There are Old Testament Scriptures to which Christ refers which testify to him and he to them.
- (e) There are Old Testament Scriptures which are not plainly or explicitly referring to him but which are clearly concerning him now that he has come, reigns and is yet to come in the Parousia.

Old Testament-New Testament Christology—a Foreview

We do not have time or space here to sum, up ‘Old Testament-New Testament Christology’. It will take us a number of further studies to do that. With strict brevity we can see is that in our concern for textual-theological investigation of Christology that concepts or figures of Christ appear in both Testaments, and the wonder of them will startle us if they are viewed with humility and reverence for Christ. They often seem to be figures of God the Father, and doubtless they do service for Father and Son. The ‘Seed’ in Genesis 3:15 is he who is manifested to destroy the works of the Devil. The prophecies of ‘Shiloh’ as the one to whom the nations come in obedience, the Son of man in similar position in Daniel, the Isaianic pictures of the Shepherd who takes up the lambs in his arms, who leads his people through their wilderness to salvation, the good Shepherd of Psalm 23 and of John 10 are of the one piece. The Stem of Jesse Spirit-anointed and bringing peace to creation, no less than the one who speaks to those ‘afar off’ in both Isaiah 57 and Ephesians, the one who Wonderful Counsellor is he in whom all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden in Colossians. The Davidic King—the Son of the Father in II Samuel 7:14; Exodus 4:22 and Hosea 11:1—is everywhere in the Old and New Testaments. Without him there is no New testament truth of the Kingdom of the father/Son. John’s Gospel portrays such Fatherhood and Sonship as to transcend all dreams of created humanity. The doctrine of the Trinity cannot but come into focus. The manna in the wilderness of the Old Testament becomes the Christ the Bread of Life sent down from heaven. All his ‘I am’s of John’s Gospel fill out the ancient I AM. Undoubtedly Christ is the Rock as of Deuteronomy 32:4 and He ‘the Rock, the Truth’, for he comes to witness to the truth, being the truth himself.

How multitudinous, then, are the combining texts and figures of both Testaments. I believe, then, that we are under love’s obligation to gather up, ponder and come to know all the Scriptures since they refer to Christ, since they are brought about by the Father, and since the Holy Spirit has come to open them, ie. open the mystery of God, and the mysteries within the work of the Trinity.

CHRIST WAS IN ALL THE OLD TESTAMENT STORY

It would be easy for us to see the Old Testament ‘law and prophets’⁴ as being prophetic regarding Christ, but that Christ was not, himself, active in all the story, movements and acts of that same Old Testament.

There are two ways in which we can approach the subject of ‘Christ in all the Old Testament’. The first is what we might call the textual element, and the second is what

⁴ Jesus said that he had not come to abrogate the law and the prophets but to fulfil them, that is, establish them. There is prophecy in the law—the first five books of Moses—and there is law in the prophets—the Former and the Latter prophets. In fact, one cannot exist apart from the other.

we might call the theological element. The textual presentation will be that in the New Testament is recognised that Christ was present in all God's action, before his incarnation. In the theological approach we will be dealing with the reality of his being the Second Member of the Trinity. What we need to keep in mind is that the subject is so vast that one small section in this book is most inadequate, that it requires a full treatment on its own, and that we are not at all attempting such a treatment. Hence the brevity of this section..

CHRIST IN THE OLD TESTAMENT ACCORDING TO THE NEW TESTAMENT TEXT

The Textual Presentation

The key passage is I Corinthians 10:1–5.

I want you to know, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, and all ate the same supernatural food⁴ and all drank the same supernatural drink. For they drank from the supernatural Rock which followed them, and the Rock was Christ. Nevertheless with most of them God was not pleased; for they were overthrown in the wilderness.

This tells us that the Israelites in the wilderness had Christ present with them. In our Appendix 2 a number commentators are quoted so that readers may have grounds for whatever conclusion they come to. Rather than my seeking to develop this text it would be good to read the Appendix. What is quite startling is that Paul speaks of Christ being in action in the Old Testament. He says, 'the Rock was Christ'. I found it remarkable that not one commentator has even questioned Paul's statement, nor found it extraordinary. In the first book in this Christological Series, we have talked about the One who was and is the Word, and who was and is the Son of God. We have said there never was a Christ before Jesus was born at Bethlehem of Mary his mother. We see now that Paul takes the word 'Christ' and projects it back to the time when Israel was in the desert.

We may say that Paul was using the term 'Christ' to show that in his being as Word and Son that he was present in Israel. Of course that is true. However he has stated a principle that the one we know as Jesus Christ was present to Israel in the desert. I think it is inescapable that Christ was present in and from the time of creation in all the elements and acts of history. Paul is certainly not saying that Christ was present only in and to the journey through the wilderness. He has enunciated a principle of Christ's ever being present in God's history. At the same time we recognise that the Old Testament does not say such things, not anyway, in an explicit manner.

Some have tried to resolve this seeming difficulty by saying that the Angel of the Lord was Christ, that Christ was the Angel of the Lord. This, I think, is a good argument. None was closer to the Lord than this Angel. Often he is spoken of as the Lord, Himself. Even so, by nature of the case the argument cannot be conclusive. Nor, I think, can any argument against the same proposition be conclusive. I feel we must suspend judgement of the matter.

We may have various hints which could be helpful such as the Melchizedekian high priesthood of Christ. The writer of Hebrews show that principally Melchizedek's ministry was superior to that of Aaron, and speaks of it being eternal, ie. 'without beginning and without end. Was, then, that mysterious figure—Melchizedek—the one we later know as Christ. Or, again, Christ being the true Adam, was then Adam created in the True Image of God, Christ, and was the one known as Word and Son of God somehow Christ before his incarnation, that Priesthood being innate in him, and so coming through in his carnation? There are a number of dazzling theories about which to speculate.

I do not know how to conduct the argument that Paul infers in his passage of I Corinthians 10:1–5, namely Christ's presence in the Old Testament. The only way we can resolve it is by going on to theological argument that the one we know as the Word incarnate was—and is—always present in history. What we can do personally and pastorally is to know that this

One has never been absent from any part of history and—more—that his Presence is indispensable to the total action, plan and intention of God, and is essential to the moment-by-moment working of the Godhead.

The Theological Presentation

This, by nature of the case is a presentation that has its roots very much in the New Testament, but never not in the Old Testament. It is simply the Trinitarian argument. The One who is Christ has ever been the second Member of the Trinity, has ever been generated by the Father, has ever been one with the Father and the Spirit in the creation of the world, in upholding the creation, in leading it to its redemption, and participating in the Trinity with the Father and the Son in reconciling, uniting, sanctifying, glorifying and perfecting creation.

On the basis of the premiss we have just presented it would be impossible for the one whom Paul called ‘the Rock’⁵ and ‘Christ’, to be absent from creation.

CONCLUSION: NO OLD TESTAMENT WITHOUT CHRIST

We suffer much these days because of the disastrous view many have of the Old Testament. They talk about ‘the God of the Old Testament’ as though he were a different one from the God of the New Testament. We need not pause to argue with this puerile argument. Christ was not only the subject of all the law and all the prophets, he was present with the human race from creation to the return of the Israelite remnant after their exile. He is still present with Israel, the Church and all mankind, in the relationships appropriate to what we call ‘covenant’.

I think the presentation we have made is tolerably correct but it is not complete if we think only of the spirit of the law and the prophets being ‘the testimony of Jesus’. If we concede that Christ was present to some of the history prior to the New Testament happenings and writing, then that concession may fall short of the full-orbed understanding that Christ who, like his Father is called ‘the Alpha and Omega’ is present in all of history—that of past, the present and the future. If we fail to see that the story of God commences at creation and come to its climax at the end of time as we know it, then we will not feel the whole story of the Old Testament—as also the New—vibrating, resonating and throbbing with Christ! Nothing in the Old Testament has Christ absent from it, nor makes sense without him.

To see this is to know how thrilling are the Scriptures, how alive and dynamic is the Old Testament, and how all its action is part of the story of faith and hope and love as it moves forward in God’s time for God’s plan. Once we see that then the Old Testament’s life becomes ours. The New Testament is not simply the fulfilment of the Old, but its continuation and its conclusion.

It is in this that we are all involved.

⁵ It can be shown that ‘the Rock’ in the Old Testament is a name for God, for example Deuteronomy 32:4, ‘The Rock, his work is perfect; for all his ways are justice. A God of faithfulness and without iniquity, just and right is he.’ In this sense Christ is accorded deity in I Corinthians 10:4.

The Person & Work of Christ: The Incarnation

INTRODUCTION: THE INCARNATION OF GOD IN CHRIST

What do we mean by Christ's Incarnation? We mean that in the man Jesus, God entered into the stream of human history. He became Man. He is one with us. He is Immanuel. We will look at the events which constitute the beginning of the Incarnation and then its active reality and finally its meaning. The claim of John in the Prologue of the first chapter of his Gospel insists that the one who was the Logos and the Son became flesh, that is, became human. Verse 14 makes this clear, 'And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father'. Whilst we speak of the incarnation of the Word we should not miss the fact that this was the incarnation of God: God became Man. Close to this is Paul's statement, 'God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself'. So, then, this Christ was 'God incarnate'. The fullness of the Godhead dwelt in him, bodily. Of course, such a concept is so incredible as to be humanly unbelievable.

CHRISTOLOGY IN THE LIGHT OF INTENTION, PROMISE AND FULFILMENT

The Beginning of Christology: The Pre-Incarnate Christ

We saw in a previous Study, 'Christ in All the Scriptures: The Pre-Incarnate Yet Always Coming Christ', that the revelation of all that Jesus was and is was made at Pentecost, and so the text of the Old Testament was seen in its meaning and significance as regards Christ. We can confidently say that the coming of the Christ was expected and the early chapters of the Gospels confirm this. Of course, after the incarnate work of Christ the thrust of the Old Testament Scriptures was more clearly seen. Christ's own use of the Scriptures in Luke 24:25–27, 44–47 and Acts 1:3 must have left its mark on the disciples and so on the whole of the Apostolic truth. If the Old Testament Scriptures do not greatly prefigure Christ and have no more than just intimations of his coming, then we can say we have only a fragmentary basis for Christology, but such is not the case.

The Incarnation and History

John McIntyre in his *The Christian Doctrine of History* (Oliver and Boyd, Edinburgh, 1957, p. 13) says, 'history is meaningful occurrence, and more particularly occurrence the meaning of which is a construct out of certain categories, namely Necessity, Providence, Incarnation, Freedom and Memory'. His book deals with history along these lines. When he comes to the Incarnation he speaks of it as (i) **fulfilment**, (ii) **redemptive** and **recreative**, (iii) as **creative**, and (iv) as **integrative**.

This he calls the Christian doctrine of history and he helps us to come to the matter of the Incarnation so that it can be seen not just as an irruption into history which some writers see it to be, but one which accords with history as meaningful, as revelation.

Christology and the Matter of Fulfilment

If we take the first element of McIntyre's thesis then we need to ask, 'Fulfilment of what?' McIntyre would say, 'The fulfilment of history', and he could be correct, but in what way is it

the fulfilment of history?¹ We know the New Testament writers had so much in mind. They had what we could call ‘salvation history’ in mind, but they had more in mind, namely the great goal of history including the last Adam and his great family, the final Holy City and Paradise, the new heaven and the new earth, the fulfilment of the original creational mandate (Gen. 1:28f.), and so the glorification, sanctification and perfection of ‘all things’. If writers mean all this by ‘salvation history’ then they are correct.

Fulfilment implies the fulfilment of something which had been set forward to be fulfilled. ‘Promise and fulfilment’ has been the theme of many a theological work. So then we may see the Incarnation as the means of fulfilment, and that would be correct. We are greatly helped in the New Testament by material regarding intention, a most important word. In our Study on ‘Comprehending the Son of God, Also Known as “The Word” Who Became Man’, we considered a number of passages—amongst many more which remained unquoted—namely those which spoke of God’s intention before time, before creating the world. These were Ephesians 1:3–14; 3:7–11; II Timothy 1:9–10; I Corinthians 2:7–10; Colossians 1:24–27; Revelation 13:8; and I Peter 1:18–20. To these we could have added other passages which explain, after the event, what God intended to do in the Incarnation, such as I John 3:8, ‘He who commits sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil’, and Hebrews 9:26, ‘But as it is, he has appeared once for all at the end of the age to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself’. There are many more passages which define the ‘why’ or ‘what for’ of his coming, and they verify the Incarnation, so to speak. Our proposition stands firm, there is no fulfilment without promise and there is no promise without intention. This is certainly a true view of history and the Incarnation.

It appears to me that we rightly speak of fulfilment of something intended or prophesied. The early Christian church saw Christ as the fulfilment of the Old Testament. That is a wide statement and might mean a number of things. For example, it could mean that the church is the fulfilment of prophecies relating to Israel, the fulfilment of Israel. Primarily it must mean that Christ is the fulfilment of the Old Testament’s prophecies concerning him, and the fulfilment of that relates to him. I suggest, then, that a good way of going about Christology is to think of it in terms of

(i) intention, (ii) promise, and (iii) fulfilment.

In our previous Study we saw that much of God’s intention in regard to Christ is stated in the New Testament. In fact all that is spoken of as intended was fulfilled in Christ, is presently being fulfilled in Christ, and will be fulfilled in Christ. It is not that the work of the one prophesied to be Son of man, Son of God, Son of David, Davidic King, the Messiah–King, Righteous Branch and Suffering Servant is not also prophesied along with predictions concerning him. It is, and its outworking can be seen as the intention of God, for prophecies are in themselves promises. Fulfilment cannot be separated from promises—including prophetic promises—and fulfilment must be of God’s intention. Intention will always be the purpose of God, so that history cannot be just of cause and effect, any more than it can be arbitrary. Within the act of history there are causes and effects, and often some actions appear to be arbitrary, but the sovereign will of God works all things with a view to the ultimate climax of history.

The New Testament not only speaks of God’s intention, but it also highlights the promises. The fulfilment of the promises they saw in Christ—‘For all the promises of God find their Yes in him. That is why we utter the Amen through him, to the glory of God’ (II Cor. 1:20). The promise of Christ covers all those offices—Son of God, Son of man, Messiah, Righteous Branch, Davidic King, etc.—predicted of him in prophecy, but the way they are understood differed from contemporary Judaism. We need to see what the apostolic church understood by fulfilment, for it certainly gave a new and different slant to the offices as they were worked

¹ We could mean many things by saying that history is fulfilment. We could mean that, as in Marxism’s dialectical materialism, there is a dialectic working in history, an evolutionary process which results in the self-fulfilment of what is innate in history. All ideologies would subscribe to this principle, their own particular ideology of course being the fulfilment of history.

through and out by Christ. We cannot achieve a true Christology by simply bringing the Old Testament Scriptures together in a kind of synthesis. That is why the primary aid to understanding Christ's person and work is Christ's own comprehension of himself.

CHRIST'S INCARNATION IN THE LIGHT OF HIS OWN STATEMENTS AND WORK

Sometimes theology is written as though the theological substance of the Creeds stands as unassailable truth and is not to be questioned, or as truth which has to be vindicated, and so this puts a writer on the stance of a vindicator rather than an expositor. Historic Christianity has taken the Incarnation to be the basis of all its theology. In this case, what Christ himself says regarding himself is important and basic to Christology. Some textual critics omit the testimony of Christ to himself on the basis that the texts used are more the mind of the early church than the pure utterances of Christ and are not valid materials for the way Christ saw himself. Given that the texts are viable, what then does he say which would lead us to see his understanding of his incarnation?

We have a number of leads. Most of the statements are made in John's Gospel and they are claims which are strongly made. *The first set is the statements regarding the sending of Christ into the world.* The verbs *apostello* (14 times) and *pempo* (24 times)—'to send'—are used of Jesus in this regard; Jesus is very clear in saying he has been sent. This could be taken in the same sense that John the Baptist claimed he was sent of God, but in his 'sent' sayings Jesus is claiming Sonship of the Father, and being sent was from the Father, from heaven and not from Nazareth, as such. Moreover he is not sent—as was John—but he is sent *from* the Father, that is, he has come 'from above'. Not to believe on him is not to believe on God the Father Who sent him (John 5:24). The Jews see this as blasphemy, as Christ making himself out to be God (cf. John 10:30–38).

The second set of statements is regarding Christ's claim that he had come from above. John 3:13, 'No one has ascended into heaven but he who descended from heaven, the Son of man'; 3:31, 'He who comes from above is above all; he who is of the earth belongs to the earth, and of the earth he speaks; he who comes from heaven is above all'; 6:38, 'For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me'; 8:14, 'Jesus answered, "Even if I do bear witness to myself, my testimony is true, for I know whence I have come and whither I am going, but you do not know whence I come or whither I am going" ²'; 8:23, 'You are from below, I am from above; you are of this world, I am not of this world': 16:27, 28, 'for the Father himself loves you because you have loved me and believed that I came from the Father. I came from the Father and have come into the world; again I am leaving the world and going to the Father'; 18:37, 'Pilate said to him, "So you are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say that I am a king. For this I was born, and for this I have come into the world, to bear witness to the truth. Every one who is of the truth hears my voice."'; 17:8, 'for I have given them the words which thou gavest me, and they have received them and know in truth that I came from thee; and they have believed that thou didst send me'.

The third set of statements is regarding the purpose for which he was sent into the world. Here the ideas of Christ's being sent and God's purpose for that sending come together. In John's Gospel we have the following: 3:17, 19, 'For God sent the Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him . . . And this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil'; 6:38, 'For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me'; 9:39, 'Jesus said, "For judgment I came into this

² Christ's statement that as a single person he could not testify, legitimately, to himself, has also to be qualified in the light of his later statement in John 8:15–19, the essence of which is that his own witness is viable because it is supported by, and is the same as, that of the Father's witness.

world, that those who do not see may see, and that those who see may become blind” ‘; 10:10, ‘The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly’; 18:37, ‘For this I was born, and for this I have come into the world, to bear witness to the truth. Every one who is of the truth hears my voice.’

It is to be noted that Jesus seems to say that he did not come to judge the world and yet that he has come to judge the world. Primarily he has come to save, but also he has come to judge. In John 5:22, 27 (cf. 9:39) it is clear that all judgment has been committed to him. Other statements regarding the fact that he came into the world to judge are later simplified by John in his First Letter (3:8), ‘The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil’. This theme is woven throughout the Gospel, and Jesus pronounces the judgment of the Devil in 12:31, 14:30–31, and 16:7–11.

In addition to what we have just said we need to speak of Christ’s understanding of himself, which comes through some of his utterances. His calling himself ‘the Son of man’ is one. His statement that he is the Son of the Father is another. His being ‘one with the Father’ is understood by the Jews as claiming to be God. Yet he says in John 8:40, ‘but now you seek to kill me, a man who has told you the truth which I heard from God; this is not what Abraham did’. He is saying clearly that he is a man, not that any who saw him doubted that, but it is a statement of incarnation, for his saying at other times that he is from above, that his origin of being is not human, though he became human. Jesus’ constant reiteration that he came to do the Father’s will tells the ‘why’ of the Incarnation (cf. John 5:30; 6:38; 8:28f.).

Statements regarding the three matters set out above—sending, coming and purpose—are also found in the Synoptic Gospels, but often they are statements which imply the principles. Thus Peter’s confession of Jesus in Matthew 16:16 is clearly affirmed by Christ. Jesus shows his coming is to be that of the Suffering Servant, ‘For the Son of man also came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many’. Luke 4:18–19 makes it clear why Christ has come, ‘The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord’. The ‘musts’ of Mark 8:31, 9:31 and 10:33 (cf. Luke 24:26, 46) are told by Christ. This is the purpose for which he has come—the Cross and the Resurrection. It links up both in the Synoptics and in John with ‘that the scripture might be fulfilled’. He came that what was prophesied of him might be fulfilled. This opens widely the purpose of his coming, that is, we see the dimensions of the purpose of his coming.

We can, then, in our development of Christology see that what Christ said about himself is of the highest importance, and although some critics may see all of these sayings as being read back into the Gospels by the early church, their testimony to the person and work of Christ still remains very strong.

THE MATTER OF CHRIST’S INCARNATION—THE SON AND WORD COMING INTO THE WORLD

As regards the manner of the conception and birth of Jesus we certainly come to a mystery. We are not asked here to lay aside our natural critical faculty, and to assume a pose of reverence as though such *seeming* humility might help us to know the mystery. We simply need to acknowledge it is a mystery. Mysteries are opened to us as revelations by the power of the Holy Spirit. Undoubtedly *genuine* humility is required before every mystery is opened because a haughty mind makes demands on God for self-justification, and this cannot be. Genuine humility surely means true fear of God, reverence for His communication to us of His intention, promises and fulfilment through His manifestation of Himself in Christ. The following New Testament Scriptures speak of the mystery, but not without their Old Testament supports of prophecy.

The Word Becomes Flesh and Is the Son of God

The passage which speaks of the Word becoming flesh is often limited to John 1:14. However we need to see it against verses 6 to 13:

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. The true light, which enlightens³ everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God. And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son,⁴ full of grace and truth (*NRSV*).

If we look at the whole passage we see its thrust is as follows, 'John was sent by God to testify to the light. The light was the true light which lightens everyone, and that light—the Word—was coming into the world. The light came—the light by which all things were created, that is, the Word—and it came to his own—Israel—and Israel did not accept him. Some received him and to them he gave authority to become children of God. This light—this Word—became flesh and tabernacled with us, and we (the apostles and others) have seen his glory as the Father's only Son, like the Father, "full of grace and truth" '.

Verse 9 tells us he was coming into the world. Verse 11 tells us he came into the world and was not accepted, whilst verses 12 and 13 informs us as to what happened when some accepted him and believed in him. Verse 14 then speaks of the act of Incarnation, 'The Word became flesh'. There was a time when the Word was not flesh and then it became flesh. The Word became human. The Word became a human being.

The statement 'the Word became flesh' of verse 14 is incomprehensible. It is an extraordinary statement. The text does not say how, or what conditions were necessary for this astonishing humanising of the Word. Of course it is unprecedented, and without precedent Incarnation is baffling. The statement 'he lived among us' means he was observable as truly human. The apostles were able to see his glory—whatever form that may have taken—and able to see that he was truly the Son of the Father. The outcome of the Word becoming flesh occupies the rest of John's Gospel, to say nothing of other Gospels, Epistles and consequent literature.

The Son is Born of a Woman

The New Testament is clear that Jesus was one born of a woman. It is also clear that this one born of a woman had existence before becoming a human baby. This is implied in John 1:14 where 'the Word *became* flesh'. No one doubted that the man Jesus was born of Mary, but John points to the pre-existent Word as becoming Man by human birth. Likewise Galatians 4:4 says, 'But when the time had fully come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law', and assumes that the Son already was, before being born of a woman. Of course it also assumes that he was genuinely Man—'born under the law'. Likewise in Romans 8:3 the same pre-existence of the Son is assumed, 'For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do: sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh'. Here the matter of the Son's

³ Commentators differ as to the meaning of the verb here translated 'enlightens', and some prefer 'lighten' to mean that the light comes as judgment not as enlightenment. When one part of the world did not know him and did not accept him then that part was lightened but unto judgment. Even 'his own'—Israel—did not all receive him, but those who did were certainly enlightened and responded.

⁴ Some commentators say this translation does not convey the thrust of the Greek 'the only Son of the Father'. See C. K. Barrett's *The Gospel According to John* (SPCK, London, 1965), p. 139.

incarnation can be described as being sent, becoming in the *likeness* of sinful flesh, though not in sinful flesh; yet not in the likeness of flesh, but really in human flesh.

It is stated in Matthew 1:20–23:

But as he considered this, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, ‘Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit; she will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.’ All this took place to fulfil what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: ‘Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and his name shall be called Emmanuel’ (which means, God with us).

The use of Isaiah 7:14 certainly points to a prophecy of human birth, but ‘that which is conceived in her’ points to more than other human births. Virginal conception is here implied, since Joseph naturally thinks her pregnancy a cause for ‘putting her away’. Virginal conception is especially so in the Lukan description of 2:31–33 which incorporates Isaiah 9:6:

And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there will be no end.

Here the term ‘Son of the Most High’ is used and there is no reference to pre-existence. Indeed it shows that this one conceived will be the Davidic King in accordance with Isaiah 9:6–7. Nor is there pre-existence implied in verse 35:

And the angel said to her, ‘The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God.’

Even so, the nature of the Incarnation is the mystery of God, in that the human born of ‘the power of the Most High’ and the overshadowing of that power speaks of high, supernatural drama of the most extraordinary nature. We have intimations of a ‘Son of God’ in Psalm 2, but without the later announcements of Jesus being God’s Son in the baptismal and transfiguration accounts, we have only the Messianic prophecies by which to interpret the idea of ‘Son of God’. ‘God’ here is the same as ‘the Most High’, and so ‘the Son of the Most High’ of verse 32 is the same as ‘Son of God’. Certainly we are confronted with high mystery, and the relief comes in knowing that it is the Holy Spirit who will ‘come upon’ Mary and there will be the overshadowing of ‘the Most High’. We are shown that it is the Divine Presence which effects the unspeakable act of Incarnation. Certainly we are permitted to join Romans 1:3–4 with this event, even though it is in some sense its eventual outcome:

... the gospel concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh and designated Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord,

for Paul is anxious to emphasise Christ’s descent from David ‘according to the flesh’ (cf. Rom. 9:4) as he is to show the holiness of Jesus as Son, and the work of the Spirit in the resurrection with its parallel to the work of virginal conception and birth.

We come away from these passages concerning his Incarnation, more than ever imbued with the wonder and the mystery of Incarnation itself. Only in reverence and awe generated by them can we behold this mystery without turning it into a Divine puzzle which our minds must grasp. It reminds us of the old saying that only in doxology can we truly know theology—all true theology is doxological. Only by the revelation of the mystery through the Spirit can we come to doxology. It could not be otherwise.

The Son Is Sent from God

We have already spoken of this sending of the Son by the Father, especially as it is stated in John’s Gospel so many times, and in other places also, but it is the purpose of the sending

which concerns us.⁵ The wholly different origin⁶ of this one who has come in the flesh as humanity is in the flesh, leads us to see the difference of this person from all who have been created, and our minds are naturally drawn to the function and work of this different human being. We need the prophecies to interpret these to us. There are many Scriptures which aid us, but the full picture of the prophecies is surely that this man, Jesus, is different and that he is not only so typically (cf. Rom. 5:12–21) like the first Adam, but that he far transcends that progenitor of the human race and that he is what is needed and desirable for being the true Adam, the one Paul calls ‘the second’ and ‘the last’ Adam.

On the matter of being sent by God, which is the great attestation to himself and his mission, Galatians 4:4 stands out as to the timing of the Incarnation. ‘In the fullness of time’ means ‘at the right moment’, because back of his birth all the prophecies and the salvation act of God have come to their climax and at this point of history the Incarnation is required, is indispensable and therefore happens. As Hebrews 9:26 states it, ‘But as it is, he has appeared once for all at the end of the age to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself’. ‘At the end of the age’ points to the apt time for Christ to come into the world. There can be no gospel without Christ: he is sent to create it, to make it the basis of salvation. On the one hand he is above all else the true Proclaimer, but what he does *makes* the proclamation; unless he *forms* the gospel there is nothing to proclaim. As it has been said, ‘The proclaimer is proclaimed’. What he has accomplished is now proclaimed. Yet he was doing only what the Father had intended and promised. The initiative is never Christ’s.

The Pre-Existent Son Comes from Above

Under this heading we are not discussing the sending—which we have already done—so much as the place from which he is sent. It is from the Father’s bosom or heaven that he comes, having been sent (John 3:13, 31; etc.). It is this which makes the mission of Jesus to be wholly of God, and his work not to have its origin in Man, but in God. The prophecies now become resonant as they are fulfilled and as their meaning is made apparent in the person and actions of the Incarnate one. Not that the fulfilment is obvious to all spectators of Christ’s person and actions. It remains for his post-resurrection teaching to do that, and then the vast revelation of Pentecost to open the mystery of Christ to the apostolic Church. If the origins of Christ and his gospel are not ‘from hence’ (John 18:36), that is, ‘not from this world’, then there can be no ‘eternal gospel’ (cf. Rev. 14:6–7), and then Jesus cannot be ‘the Christ, the Son of the living God’.

CHRISTOLOGY IN THE LIGHT OF THE TITLES AND MINISTRIES OF CHRIST

We now come to see the work which Christ did in the light of his person, his person which is seen in the light of his work. We have used the terms ‘Titles’ and ‘Ministries’. Reformed theology called both these his ‘offices’. What we have said above in this present Study is really an introduction to origin and mission. Now we attend to the titles which he took and

⁵ We have dealt with these purposes in previous Studies under the heading of ‘the intention of God’. By these the purpose of God is made explicit, for example I John 3:8, ‘He who commits sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil.’ Any comprehension of Christ’s being sent has to take such a purpose into consideration. Other passages we have previously mentioned are John 6:38, 10:10b, 18:37, and Hebrews 9:26—see above, ‘*The third set of statements is regarding the purpose for which Christ was sent into the world*’.

⁶ Hebrews 2:11 states of Christ and his brethren, ‘For he who sanctifies and those who are sanctified have all one origin. That is why he is not ashamed to call them brethren.’ Some translations say ‘have all one Father’. ‘One origin’ is not referring to mode of origin, since Christ alone had virginal conception, and I Corinthians 15:47 says, ‘The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven’, and this makes the difference. As to God’s being Father of Christ and his brethren, all have one origin.

some which were accorded him as the natural outcome, the conclusions which come from his person and work. Reformation theology also spoke of Christ as 'Prophet, Priest and King', but here at this point we will not pursue those titles as a triad. We have observed already that the title 'Christ' is accorded to Jesus in Acts 2:36 by Peter on the day of Pentecost and for many Christology begins here with that declaration of his Lordship and Messiahship. We will take these and other titles as we find them in the New Testament.

We need to say a word here about our method of examining the Christological titles. Our Studies are primarily on the works of Christ and how they affect us, whilst also effecting the will of God for the completion of creation in sanctification, glorification and perfection. We propose to give very short details on the titles and emphasise, rather, the work of Christ in his Ministry, Cross, Death, Resurrection, Ascension, Reigning and Return. To have a quick sketch of each title will be helpful when we come to these works.⁷

Prophet

For hundreds of years Israel had known no prophets, and so those devoted to the sacred writings had concentrated on the written prophets, surveying these and learning from them. Joel 2:28 puts the return of prophecy into the last days, the eschaton, and Peter quotes this in his speech at Pentecost (Acts 2:14f.). John the Baptist was then an unusual phenomenon, and not one of a class contemporary with him. Jesus described him as 'a prophet, yes, and more than a prophet', for John proclaimed the Kingdom and saw it coming. Of Jesus we can say he was 'more than more than a prophet', since he eclipsed John. The prophet spoke from God, but God was Jesus' Father which puts him in a special category, and that category is seen in Deuteronomy 18:15ff. This was the unique Prophet. John was asked whether he was *the* prophet and he denied being so. Jesus virtually referred to himself as a prophet when he said a prophet has no honour in his own country and that he should hasten to Jerusalem for that was where the prophets perished. His own knowledge of 'the law and the prophets' was prodigious and the background of all his thinking. He was the one who anticipated the eschaton, and who taught and warned concerning it. Whilst he left it to the Holy Spirit to tell 'things to come', he was the one who so worked that things to come were of him. Well has it been said that 'Eschatology is Christ'. The prophet had the ministry of giving the word of God as though it were directly from God through him to the listeners, and he knew and expressed the mind of God as to the future. The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy (Rev. 19:10).

Servant

Jesus said in Mark 10:45, 'For the Son of man also came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many'. In the context of this saying he was talking about the principle of servanthip, but he points to giving his life as a ransom for many. This giving his life as a ransom is his being servant, is the matter of salvation. This accords with the four Servant Songs of Isaiah chapters 40 – 55. Isaiah 52:13 – 53:12 speaks most of the Suffering Servant and the redemption he effects. In Isaiah's Songs of the Servant the prophet draws pictures of suffering and rejection and at the same time of the brilliant light the Servant will spread across the earth. That his death will not end the ministry of this Servant is indicated in Isaiah 53:12. Philippians 2:1–11 draws much the same picture as the Isaianic Songs, of one who is humble, not seen as desirable, yet who is obedient 'unto death, even unto death on a cross'. In this passage Christ takes 'the form of a servant' (v. 7), which is the way of

⁷ In our studies we take for granted that in general the early church, including the apostolic writers and proclaimers, had a unity of belief and understanding. It is clear that the different writers of the Gospels, Acts and the Epistles had their own views and ways of seeing Jesus, but we take it that there was a profound unity in this diversity. If these differences are not called to mind to the reader it does not mean they did not exist, but we can be sure the general Christology we follow was known to all, if expressed in differing ways and from varying points of view.

kenosis.⁸ In II Corinthians 8:9 the principle is stated, 'For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich'. What we should not miss, however, is that the Old Testament *Ebed Yahweh*—'the servant of the Lord'—is in the Acts 'the [holy] servant of God' (3:13, 26; 4:27, 30). He is the one fulfilling God's will, and as we have seen this will is of 'salvation history' unto total salvation, which is sanctification, glorification and perfection of the creation.

The Son of Man

This is an important term in the Gospels and in another sense in the Epistles, especially in Paul's when it links up with the idea of Christ being the second and last Adam. This does not appear to be its primary meaning in the Gospels where it is used some forty times by Jesus as concerning himself. To read each of these sayings is to gather the meaning and value of the title. The term can simply mean 'a man', but because it has other connotations, such as its use in Daniel 7:13ff., it becomes quite a significant title. If we understand Matthew 26:63–65, then we see what it meant at his trial. It was considered to be blasphemy. His use of the title seems almost to surpass the title 'the Son of God' in importance:

But Jesus was silent. And the high priest said to him, 'I adjure you by the living God, tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God.' Jesus said to him, 'You have said so. But I tell you, hereafter you will see the Son of man seated at the right hand of Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven.' Then the high priest tore his robes, and said, 'He has uttered blasphemy. Why do we still need witnesses? You have now heard his blasphemy. What is your judgment?' They answered, 'He deserves death.'⁹

The title brings us close to all that Jesus was and did as a man, and especially as *the* man, the man Adam was called to be but did not fulfil.¹⁰ What impresses us about the titles is that when they are all properly considered then there emerges a Person of unbelievable dimensions and nature. No wonder scholars down through the ages have been baffled to categorise this one. No wonder our relationship with Him is the greatest we know and need to know. No wonder Paul spoke of 'the inexhaustible riches of Christ'.

⁸ The best way of looking at *kenosis*—the self-emptying of Jesus—is not to look at it too theologically. In the argument of Philippians 2:1–11 Paul is saying that we should look to the interests of others, and not just to our own, and we should 'count others better than ourselves' which must mean putting them before us. This is just what the Son does in 'making himself of no reputation'. He does not humble himself to become Man: he longs to do that in the Father's plan. That is the meaning of the principle of *kenosis*. He humbles himself to the death of the Cross and this is the loving work of the Kenotic Servant.

⁹ It could be debated whether Jesus was indicted on calling himself the Son of God or the Son of man. It seems to me that because in Mark 14:62 Jesus appears to answer in the direct affirmative, that he is indicted, but Jesus appears to be saying, 'and even beyond being the Son of God, I am that Son of man of whom Daniel spoke, so that it is I who have the authority over all nations, and I will be on the right hand of the Power (God) in coming to judge the whole earth'. Certainly the title 'Son of man' is a high one. Oscar Cullman in his *The Christology of the New Testament* (SCM, London, 1959) spends fifty-five pages on this title and thinks it the most important of all the Christological titles.

¹⁰ It is Paul who develops 'Adam theology', particularly in Romans 5:12–21 and in I Corinthians 15.

The Person & Work of Christ: The Incarnation—II

CHRISTOLOGY IN THE LIGHT OF THE TITLES AND MINISTRIES OF CHRIST (CONT.)

Messiah

It is clear that the early Christians believed in Jesus the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ. They took this term to themselves because that is how they saw the Person and ministry of Jesus and at Antioch they were first dubbed 'Christians', which was a term of mockery. At the Crucifixion Jesus was taunted with 'If thou be the Christ', and similar statements. The reading of the literature of Judaism and the Dead Sea Scrolls gives us the information that whilst the term 'Messiah' is scarcely used in the Old Testament, yet by the time of Jesus' incarnation there was a body of ideas concerning it. The basis of this was the covenantal promise of II Samuel 7:12ff., along with associated promises—generally in covenantal form—of a Davidic King who, like David, would restore the Kingdom to Israel and give it peace (*shalom*). The use of Psalm 2, which spoke of Yahweh's King ruling the nations, the basis of Psalm 89:3, 'Thou hast said, "I have made a covenant with my chosen one, I have sworn to David my servant: 'I will establish your descendants for ever, and build your throne for all generations' "'', and related passages such as Jeremiah 30:8f., Isaiah 55:3, Ezekiel 37, and Psalm 72, all build into a Messianic figure. The *Psalms of Solomon* and other apocryphal literature helped to build expectancy of the eschatological personage.

In the Acts, Epistles and Revelation the man Jesus is clearly known as Messiah. In the Gospels Jesus appears to avoid applying the term directly to himself, for it would seem that he had no desire to precipitate adverse action by doing so. Nathaniel's statement, 'Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!' (John 1:49), is a Messianic recognition. Peter's 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God' (Matt. 16:16) is clear enough, although Jesus forbade him to tell others. John's Gospel has statements referring to Jesus as being the Messiah (1:41; 4:25–26, 29; 6:69; 7:29; 10:24–25; cf. 20:31). The injunction of the High Priest at Jesus' trial, 'I adjure you by the living God, tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God' (Matt. 26:63), receives a reply from Jesus which seems to be ambiguous. A study of the three Synoptic passages seems to add up to a 'yes', but in the opinion of some exegetes it seems to be an evasion of the question. The claim to be 'the Son of man' is unambiguous and is no less strong than a claim to be Messiah, hence it cannot be divorced from the idea of Messiah.¹ Whatever the reply of Jesus, it is impossible to say all that he did and was did not add up to his being Messiah, especially when he appears as the Davidic King in his work and teaching of the Kingdom of God, to say nothing of the genealogies which must deliberately point to his Davidic descent.

We should also see that the linking together of 'Messiah' and 'Son of God' further confirms his person as being that of the Old Testament prophecies, the true Messiah, Davidic King.

High Priest

It is the writer of Hebrews who develops the idea of Jesus being the appointed High Priest of God for His people. The term 'Christ' is used some ten times in the Epistle, one of these being 'Christ Jesus'. Jesus was of the lineage of David and not of Levi or Aaron, hence he

¹ See our treatment of the Son of man previously given in these Studies.

was not a high priest of the order of Aaron. He was a priest after the order of Melchizedek, the person referred to in Genesis chapter 14, described in Hebrews 5:8–10 as follows:

Although he was a Son, he learned obedience through what he suffered; and being made perfect he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him, being designated by God a high priest after the order of Melchizedek.

It is clear from 2:17 that ‘he had to be made like his brethren in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make expiation for the sins of the people’. This means that from his birth (2:11–17) his being made God’s High Priest was the story of his life as described in 5:5–10; that is, his fulfilment of Psalms 2:7 and 110:4 and his suffering. So, then, making him God’s High Priest involves his being God’s Son and the fulfilling of these two Scriptures just quoted. He had to learn obedience through what he suffered. He did not learn *to become* obedient, but learned what obedience entailed for him—the suffering as a man, and the great act of the Cross. All priests must have ‘something to offer’ (Heb. 8:3). What he offered willingly was his body in order to be the atoning sacrifice for sins, whereby he became the victim for human sins, and sanctified and perfected his people for ever (10:8–14). Through his death he has led his people through death and via resurrection into the sanctuary of God (10:19–22; 13:20–21). He ever lives, now to make intercession for his people, which is a fruit of his sacrifice and the expression of his eternal High Priesthood.

We note the importance in Hebrews of God’s new covenant—as against the ineffective former covenant—for his blood was ‘the blood of the everlasting covenant’, and he was ‘the mediator of a new covenant’ and ‘the surety of a better covenant’. His priesthood stands as eternal, if we understand what that means. All other elements of his pre-existent and incarnate personage must be understood in the light of his Melchizedekian Priesthood as it also must be understood in the light of them.

How incredible an office!

Lord

The material relating to this office or ministry of Christ is vast. Without doubt, the term ‘Lord’ is used in the Synoptic Gospels by Jesus regarding himself: ‘Not everyone who says “Lord! Lord!” ‘; ‘Lord of the Sabbath’; ‘The Lord hath need of him’; and especially the use of the term ‘Lord’ in Mark 12:35ff. Even so, it is difficult to assess the value given to the term until the Resurrection, and even more the revelation of Jesus given at Pentecost. There is a sense in which the Lordship of Christ is realised in the work of the Cross and the Resurrection. Thus Peter can say, on the day of Pentecost, ‘Let all the house of Israel therefore know assuredly that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified’. There must have been some understanding of the term and significance of the word ‘Lord’ or Peter’s statement would have been pointless. As it was linked with ‘Christ’ it gained significance. The exposition given by Jesus on Psalm 110:1, ‘The LORD says to my lord: “Sit at my right hand, till I make your enemies your footstool” ‘, in Mark 12:35ff. speaks of two Lords, and points to the son of David as one of these Lords. So, then, the idea of Jesus being Lord, as Messiah, as the Messianic Son of David, would be intelligible.

From that point on, the ministry of Christ as Lord is greatly expounded in the apostolic sermons of Acts and in the exposition of Jesus as the Liberator of God’s people from their various enemies, including that of death. ‘For to this end Christ died and lived again, that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living’ (Rom. 14:9). The revelation of him as Lord can only come through the Holy Spirit (I Cor. 12:3). The uses of the term ‘Lord’ used by Jesus of himself or others now comes into its full bloom of meaning. Likewise his victory over Satan and all evil powers is seen for what it is. Perhaps Thomas is the best exponent of understanding Lordship when he falls at Jesus’ feet, crying, ‘My Lord and my God!’

In terms of Christology it means that the name of Yahweh is applied to Christ, hence Lordship involves Deity. The high office of being ‘Lord of all’ and ‘Lord over all’, certainly relates to his being King of the Kingdom of God.

A Full Christology or Summary of Titles and Ministries

There is something artificial in attributing to the man Jesus the various titles and ministries, as though he is the sum of these. The more we examine them the more we see how they are related, how they are in fact terms which speak of the one, integrated Person and the work that he does. We do not seek here to integrate them or define their relationship. Also at this point we must limit ourselves in further terms applied in Christology to Jesus—terms such as Saviour of Men, the Revealer of God, the Lord of the Church, and so on, as set out in various Christologies.² We have determined the fact that Christology relates to the Person and Work of Christ, and so now we must trace these matters in his Incarnation, in what are called ‘the days of his flesh’. We have set out the fact of God’s intention, His promises which relate to those intentions, and the fulfilment of them in the Person and Work of Christ.

God in His action in the Old Testament is best known in His being as King, that is, as King over all creation, over all nations, and particularly as King of Israel. At the same time, everything about Him is seen in the light of His everlasting Covenant. Kingdom and Covenant also go together in the thinking of Judaism contemporary with Jesus in the ‘days of his flesh’. The early chapters of the Synoptic Gospels can only be understood in the light of these two matters. Whilst little or nothing is explicitly spoken of covenant, it is the ethos and milieu of those times. We know that the Davidic kingdom was what was in view, and we cannot speak of that Kingdom apart from the Davidic Covenant. We will proceed with these two things in mind.

CHRIST IN THE DAYS OF HIS FLESH

Christ as King Proclaims the Kingdom

Since we have spoken of the work of Christ as covering all his activity before time, in the era preceding his Incarnation, the days of his flesh, the Cross, Resurrection, Ascension, Reigning and Parousia, it is now appropriate to speak of his work which began with his baptism. The baptism was his commissioning by the Father, ‘This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased’, as also his coronation³ as King, for as the Son crowned King (Messiah) in Psalm 2:4–9; the King of Psalms 89, 110; as the Son of II Samuel 7:12ff.; the Davidic King of Jeremiah 30:8f., 55:3, Ezekiel 37, and Psalm 72, his is truly attested royalty. In the Father’s baptismal declaration, Psalm 2:6–7 is involved: ‘“I have set my king on Zion, my holy hill.” I will tell of the decree of the LORD: He said to me, “You are my son, today I have begotten you”’, and is conflated with Isaiah 42:1: ‘Behold my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my Spirit upon him, he will bring forth justice to the nations’.

² For example *The Work of Christ* by I. Howard Marshall (Paternoster Press, Carlisle, 1969); *The Christology of the New Testament* by Oscar Cullman (SCM, London, 1963); *Christology in the Making* by J. D. G. Dunn, (London, 1980), plus his article ‘Christology (NT)’ in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, vol. 1 (Doubleday, New York, 1992, pp. 979–91).

³ Coronation is the appropriate word to use. It may also be said that Christ’s coronation, in another sense, is in stages. The affirmation of the Father is wholly repeated at his transfiguration on Mt Tabor, which was with a view to his Cross where his victory for the Kingdom is achieved. Likewise his Resurrection is part of that royal victory, his Ascension likewise, as he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and when he comes as the King in his Parousia. The use of Psalms 2:6–7 and 110:1 in all these events is significant, and conclusive of his being declared King and reigning as King, with the Father.

It is amazing to us that the Word-become-flesh is the man of about thirty years of age who stands on the edge of his ministry and faces the commission of God as His Anointed One, announcing after the precursory ministry of John the Baptist, ‘The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent, and believe in the gospel’. John was the first prophet in Israel after hundreds of years, so that a new era—that of the coming of the Kingdom—is announced to Israel, and announced in the light of the universal forgiveness of sins and the eschatological outpouring of the Holy Spirit! We wonder at this young man coming to fulfil the Divine intention to redeem, sanctify, glorify and perfect His humanity and His entire creation. When we say, ‘We wonder’, we mean that none other than ‘the man of heaven’ could undertake so massive a task. Our human flesh would tremble just at the very thought. We have no right to deify his humanity so that it is no longer humanity working. We have to see with unveiled eyes that his is the humanity which is manifested to destroy the works of the Devil. What he accomplishes he must accomplish in the truth of his humanity, as the second and last Adam. He is the one who has come in the business of the Kingdom of his Father, the Kingdom which is not of this world. He has come to bear witness to the truth, as against the deceit of the serpent who was once in Eden, and who from there has continually sought to deceive the nations, showing himself as victorious and the hinderer of God’s plan. The man of heaven has come to put down every enemy, the last of which is death, and death is swallowed up in victory,⁴ thus fulfilling the everlasting covenant.⁵

The Kingdom Ministry

Basic to understanding what we have just written, is the statement of his ministry in Luke 4:18–19:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.

This is the King about the business of the Kingdom. Likewise the statement of Matthew 12:28 asserts his work of the Kingdom, ‘But if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you’. It is clear that the demons cry out at his approach, not only confessing him as the Christ, the Holy One of God, but knowing they are subject to him in this work of the Kingdom. He rebukes them, dispossesses them of their powers over humanity—no less the humanity which is within Israel—by healing men and women of their infirmities, many of which have come upon these persons through demonic action. He teaches the Kingdom in the passages of the Sermon on the Mount and the Kingdom parables, yet it is also by the exorcisms, healings and signs that the Kingdom is made manifest. This Kingdom ministry is seen in Matthew 4:23–24:

And he went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and preaching the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every infirmity among the people. So his fame spread throughout all Syria, and they brought him all the sick, those afflicted with various diseases and pains, demoniacs, epileptics, and paralytics, and he healed them.

Again, the same principle is seen in Matthew 9:35–36:

And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every disease and every infirmity. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.

We cannot escape the conviction that as Jesus the King of the Kingdom moved through Palestine, all evil powers retreated before his authority, and all works that Jesus saw needed to

⁴ See I Corinthians 15:54–55, Isaiah 25:8, *passim*.

⁵ See I Corinthians 15:24–28.

be undone were undone, whilst his own true works were executed and his mission accomplished as required. Peter's succinct summary of Jesus' ministry, told to the Gentiles at Caesarea, is comprehensive, 'how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; how he went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him' (Acts 10:38).

The Battle with Satan and the World

Whether we speak of the man Jesus as the Messiah acclaimed by God, or as the Davidic King proclaiming the Kingdom and about the business of the Davidic Covenant—for this is how the crowds on Palm Sunday understood his saving work—we have to see that the battle of the Kingdom, the very clash of the two kingdoms, stretches as far back as Eden and is now universally in action with a view to the eschaton of God. The temptations set before Jesus by Satan in the wilderness are of principal importance because Satan seeks to deceive Jesus in his obtaining of the Kingdom and hence in his proclamation of it.⁶ Thus Jesus' statements regarding the Strong Man and the Stronger Than the Strong Man are to be seen as Jesus' Messianic work in destroying the power of Satan. This principle set out in the Synoptic Gospels (Matt. 12:22–30; Mark 3:23–27; Luke 11:14–23) has parallel statements in John's Gospel. First the statements by Christ regarding the Devil in John 8:42–45, then the declarations of 12:31, 14:30–31, and 16:7–11, which speak of the defeat of the prince of this world, especially with reference to the Cross. Throughout his ministry in Palestine, Christ had been attacking Satan and his powers, pulling down the kingdom of the wicked, and moving towards the hour of the Cross of which he speaks in Luke 22:53 to 'the chief priests and officers of the temple and elders', saying, 'But this is your hour, and the power [authority: *exousia*] of darkness'. We know that whilst the authority of darkness was exercised by Satan and his powers, yet it failed: the victory of the Kingdom lay in the work of the Cross. Acts 10:38—quoted in the section above—along with Hebrews 2:14–15 and Colossians 2:14–15, show that Christ's ministry was as I John 3:8 describes it: 'He who commits sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil.'

Conflict Regarding Jesus and the Kingdom

We have briefly stated the conflict of Christ as King with the kingdom of darkness, but as we come closer to the events of the last week, when Jesus was welcomed as the humble King of Zechariah 9:9 on Palm Sunday, we realise that the temple authorities see Jesus' ministry in regard to the Kingdom of God as a dangerous menace. The danger is linked with the kingdom of Rome: Rome might come and destroy the nation of Israel if Jesus proves to be too strong with his powers and especially the ability to raise humans from the dead as in the specific case of Lazarus. They reason that multitudes would follow him, thus giving cause for Romans massacring the nation. They then use the matter of his supposed claim of Kingship against him, telling Pilate that he, Jesus, was making himself out to be a king who was against Rome, hence Pilate's conversation with Jesus. The Jews' hypocritical claim, 'We have no king but Caesar', went hard against Jesus. Pilate recognised something of the spiritual character of Jesus' Kingdom, and so his indictment of Jesus' supposed crime penned in the superscription nailed on the Cross. He wrote, 'Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews', and this was, it seems, ironic with its satire directed to the Jewish leaders. Their alarm at what was written and their objection was met with, 'What I have written I have written'. The Gospel accounts clear Jesus of any political involvement and also bring to light the kind of battle Jesus had with the political powers both in Israel and Rome. His work was to effect the victory of the Kingdom in the work of the Cross and Resurrection. His battle was primarily with the kingdom of darkness.

⁶ Jesus' admonition to Peter, 'Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me; for you are not on the side of God, but of men', unmasks Peter's way of being Satan's instrument.

Other Elements in the Work of Christ

We have suggested the background of Christ's ministry as being that of the Kingdom of God and God's Everlasting Covenant. The New Testament Epistles expound his work as being salvific—the action of salvation history—and the announcement of the Kingdom by John included the forgiveness of sins and the outpouring of the Spirit. Jesus in his declaration of Isaiah 61:1 (cf. Luke 4:18–19⁷) showed the work of his ministry and links with Luke 7:22 (cf. Isa. 29:18–19; 35:5–6; 61:1) which was a message for John the Baptist as he contemplated Jesus' ministry from prison. He said, 'Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the poor have good news preached to them'. That is why the Epistles make much of Christ's work in the forgiveness of sins, his deliverance of men and women from the evil powers, of justification, sanctification and adoption as springing from the work of Christ, and these things we will deal with in detail when we look at the work of the Cross and Resurrection. We also need to see that Jesus was incarnate in order to reveal God as Father to Man, and so to be the way, the truth and the life relating to the Father. Hence Peter's statement of John 6:68–69, 'Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life; and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God.'

COMPREHENDING THE INCARNATION; COMPREHENDING CHRIST

We now come to a vital consideration in this part of our Study. How do we comprehend Christ's Incarnation? It may be that this section would be better placed after the studies on the Cross and the Resurrection,⁸ but a consideration of the facts as we know and receive them means that we must be able to understand them, and by 'understand' we do not mean simply a mental grasp of them. Paul—to take one case—knew that what he preached could not come into comprehension in his hearers unless he proclaimed the mystery of God—the gospel—plainly and in the power of the Holy Spirit (I Cor. 2:1–5; cf 1:17). He had been given the gospel as a revelation from Christ (Gal. 1:11–16) and he understood others could only know it by the revelatory power of the Spirit.

That is exactly the case for us: unless the Holy Spirit reveals the truth our knowledge may be only formal, be correct doctrine yet be lacking heart-comprehension. In John 6:63 Jesus said, 'It is the spirit that gives life, the flesh is of no avail; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life'. With this Peter agreed when he said, 'You have the words of eternal life', that is, '*only* you have the words of eternal life; you have *only* the words of eternal life'.

We remember that the disciples had not really comprehended the Person and Work of Christ, up to the night of his betrayal. They had not really heard his oft-repeated message to them, that he was to be taken by the hands of wicked men and slain and rise again on the third day. On the one hand there was the accomplishment of all he had set out to do in his ministry, and this had been successful, but on the other hand defeat stared them all in the face. Later Jesus was to chide them that they had not believed what he had told them in anticipation of the last week of his life. He chided the two disciples on the road to Emmaus that they had not believed 'all that the prophets had spoken'. He said their state was that they were *foolish and slow of heart* to believe. We saw previously that he had a right expectation of their comprehension of these Scriptures.

If that were the case with the disciples who companied with him, why should we fare better? We might think that having almost 2,000 years to contemplate the facts we would easily comprehend them. It is not contemplation of the facts which of itself effects comprehension of Christ. Because he is unique and we have no precedent of such a person or

⁷ The program of Luke 4:18–19 calls for thoughtful consideration as the ministry of Christ.

⁸ The idea of comprehension is here related to the Incarnation but it is equally applicable to all Christ's Works and his Person.

his works, then understanding is virtually impossible. That is, without the inspiration and revelation of the Holy Spirit. It is also fair to say that our motives for understanding are not necessarily clear. This argument I am putting forward regarding comprehension will only gain credence when we recognise that the Person and Work of Christ must come to us by revelation. If we paused and tried to comprehend the vastness of the Word become flesh, God become a man and true Man, and the work required to fulfil the intention of God for all creation and its history, and then if we looked at the powers ranged against Jesus of Nazareth and the immense task of destroying all the works of the Devil and recreating Man by renovation and regeneration through the gospel, then our little minds would totter in their feebleness. It is amazing how much reliance we place upon our mental capacities to size up and sum up Christ's Person and Work. It is also amazing how much we rely on our powers of comprehension, as though we consider we can understand by our own reasoning. When, however, we think of Christ in the titles and ministries set out in this and the previous Study, then our spirits tremble to think how little we can grasp the truth of Christ in his being and work when we are unaided by the Spirit. To reiterate: Paul always felt the miracle required in a human being to understand the gospel so that he or she would proclaim the gospel so that it would then be understood by listeners, for the same miracle would be required in the listener to understand as was needed for the proclaimer to comprehend. Of course, if it were simply a matter of theological constructs, and the devising of a full-bodied theology, then there would be no problem. A clever atheist or even the Devil might be able to accomplish this.

PENTECOST AND CHRISTOLOGY

If we ask why it is difficult, if indeed not impossible, for us to comprehend the Incarnation, then let us say that great minds have wrestled with the matter and have been found incapable of explaining it. How can a human being understand God becoming Man—the Eternal Word becoming a human being—and then as a human being never has been?⁹ A good example of this is Philippians 2:1–11:

So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any incentive of love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfishness or conceit, but in humility count others better than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Brilliant minds have wrestled with this. How could they understand being 'in the form of God' except formally? How could they understand, 'but emptied himself,¹⁰ taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men'? Reading the whole passage someone might express it simply, 'He means, "With all the spiritual resources available to you in Christ and the Holy Spirit, think on the things of others before yourself, and put others before you and thus have the mind of Christ when he did that in his incarnation. He did not humble himself to become a human being, for that was not a thing of degradation but of love, but he could not

⁹ We are thinking of Adam as the man of dust, and Jesus as the man of heaven. The first was a living being, the second a life-giving spirit. Jesus was not other than any other human being, even though he was without sin, but that as a man he was a life-giving spirit moves us to say that our comprehension of him cannot come from mere contemplation or our own native wit.

¹⁰ What is known as the *kenosis* or self-emptying of Christ is beyond logical comprehension. If my idea is correct there is a human self-emptying every time we consider others better than ourselves, or we look not on our own interests primarily but the interests of others.

go to the debasing Cross-death without humbling himself, for the Cross was a debasing matter. The outcome of it all was God's exaltation of him because he did not seek to refuse incarnation in favour of retaining himself for himself. He expressed his being as God by becoming a man for humanity's sake." '.

Doubtless such high and stunning thoughts were not in the minds of the disciples on the night of the Last Supper. They were trying to grasp what seemed abysmal failure on the part of Jesus' mission. It was then Jesus told them they would understand all they needed to know, but not until the Holy Spirit came. When he did he would bring into their remembering everything that he, Jesus, had spoken and thus he—the Holy Spirit—would teach them 'all things', that is, the things they needed to know. The Holy Spirit himself would be their teacher. He would lead them into all the truth, and would glorify Christ the Son and his Father. This would mean that there was nothing more that he needed to lead them into: they would be taught all and know all of the truth.

If we stop here for a moment and digest the last paragraph, we see that they would understand the Incarnation. As Jesus had claimed, his words were spirit and life, and as Paul later said:

Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is from God, that we might understand the gifts bestowed on us by God. And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who possess the Spirit (I Cor. 2:12–13),

so the disciples would be brought into the category of those who know, by the Spirit, the mystery of God, one part of which is the Incarnation.

In John chapters 14 to 16 Jesus went on to say that they would understand why he had been persecuted and why they would be similarly persecuted, and indeed that the Spirit in them would convict the world of sin, righteousness and judgment. He would glorify the Son and the Father in a way which could not be denied by those under conviction. The Spirit would show them 'things to come', which must have included the things they would meet along the way, and in larger part the things of the eschaton and its *telos*—the things leading to the goal, and the goal itself.¹¹

This latter promise leads us to what Paul is speaking about in I Corinthians 2:1–16, verses 12 and 13 of which we have quoted above. In speaking of 'What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived', Paul is speaking of what God has prepared for those who love Him, that is, the things of their ultimate glorification. In the same breath he says that 'God has revealed [them] to us by his Spirit'. That is, the Holy Spirit has come and opened these things to us. This is incredible. He then explains that 'the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God'.¹² It is implied that the Spirit tells us these depths of God. That, to us, is a thing incomprehensible, but in I Corinthians 1:30–31, Paul had said, 'He [God] is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, whom God made our wisdom, our righteousness and sanctification and redemption; therefore, as it is written, "Let him who boasts, boast of the Lord" '. Not only does the Spirit communicate these things to us, but we have nothing that does not come from the source, God, and which is not Christ himself, even to wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption. We have no grounds on which to boast of anything, let alone of ourselves comprehending the mystery of God!

When it comes to the matter of Christ himself, Paul speaks in Ephesians 3:8ff. of 'the unsearchable riches of Christ' and that he has been equipped to preach these. In Colossians 2:2–3 he speaks of communicating to the Colossians and the Laodiceans 'all the riches

¹¹ Any reader might justifiably say that this present disquisition should come after the accounts of the Cross and Resurrection, and would be correct in saying so, since the Holy Spirit was to teach them all things, including the Cross and Resurrection. Even so, we do stand today as those who live in post-resurrection times and in the line of our dealing with Christ's different works, we may need to draw ourselves up to properly comprehending what we have already done in Christology to help in further understanding the Works to come in our study.

¹² Some translations have 'the deep things of God'.

of assured understanding and the knowledge of God's mystery, of Christ, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge'. Again, such vast knowledge and human comprehension of it by the Spirit is stunning to our minds who read these words. 'Can a human being know God in this way?' it is asked, and the resounding answer is, 'Yes!' Elsewhere Paul adds, 'We shall know, even as we are known'.

When the day of Pentecost was fully come then the Spirit was poured out upon the 120 people present, and this full knowledge came to them, and not only to the apostles. The apostolic truth was opened to all who were filled with the Holy Spirit. All things did come to their remembrance; they were taught all things; they were led into all the truth; they did know 'things to come' and they received the power to communicate the mystery of God—Christ, the gospel of Christ, both being the one. None of this truth was cryptic, none of it esoteric. When therefore they spoke, they spoke as those moved by the Holy Spirit. They could not but tell the things they had seen and heard, and not with bewilderment or as seeing in a glass darkly, but as those who with unveiled faces behold the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

CONCLUSION: WE BELIEVE AND THEREFORE WE SPEAK

Any thought of the deep things of God being material for special investigation, or truth that needs to be vetted before it is uttered, is far from the case. I hope I may be forgiven for taking what seems to be partly a detour from the subject of Christology, but it seems to me imperative that we do not subject the Person and Work of Christ to a critical analysis, but that we come to it with awe and reverence, and with the mind of comprehension given to us by the Spirit. At this point we see the great mystery of the Incarnation, yet not the Incarnation as a thing in itself but that we see the purpose of the Incarnation and its part in the whole of salvation history. Some who make much of the Incarnation do so on other bases. They do not wholly see it in the light of God's eternal intention, His promises and the fulfilment of these in the *telos* he has ordained. Until they do this, they are not faithful to Christ's Person and Work, nor to the intrinsic truth of the Incarnation.

The Person & Work of Christ: The Incarnation—III

THE WORK OF THE CROSS

Introduction: The Eternal Intention & Nature of the Cross

We have seen that all Christ's Person and Work is linked with the principles of history as we can understand it biblically; that is, of intention, promise and fulfilment. Intention presupposes necessity, as necessity presupposes intention. We saw God's intention in I Peter 1:20, 'He was destined before the foundation of the world but was made manifest at the end of the times for your sake'. Peter is speaking here about the blood of Christ. In Revelation 13:8 the intention of God before time is to slay the Lamb. John the Baptist's statement, 'Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!' conjured up in the minds of perceptive Jews the Old Testament ideas of slaying a lamb for sin, whether it be in the sacrificial cultus or as the lamb of the Passover. In the Book of the Revelation the risen Christ is seen in his power, but his resurrection power is linked with his having been slain. So, in chapter 5 it is the Lamb-once-slain who holds the reins of all history as the one who opens the seven-sealed book. History proceeds from the Cross through the Resurrection.

The intention of an event is often described after that event, for example:

For the love of Christ controls us, because we are convinced that one has died for all; therefore all have died. And he died for all, that those who live might live no longer for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised (II Cor. 5:14–15).

One intention of the Cross was that he would die for all, but clearly that this death would effect a change from self-preoccupation to occupation with God. Likewise, 'he has appeared once for all at the end of the age to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself', and 'The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil', are statements after the event which tell of prior intention of that event. Certain passages of the Old Testament can be linked with the Cross and they are often promises of the event yet to be fulfilled, though in their contexts they do not appear after this fashion. The fact of God's pre-creation intention and the later telling of accomplishment help us to see the *dei*, the 'must of necessity'. As we have seen in Mark 8:31, 9:31, 10:32, and Luke 24:26, 46, 'the must of necessity' demands the fulfilment. The point in our looking at all this is to be assured that the event of the Cross was not an accident, or an event forced by circumstances, but was occasioned by the will of God. This balance of God's will and Man's action is seen in Acts 2:23, 'this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men'. Likewise in Acts 4:27–28, 'for truly in this city there were gathered together against thy holy servant Jesus, whom thou didst anoint, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, to do whatever thy hand and thy plan had predestined to take place'.

The Mystery of the Cross

In I Corinthians 2:6–14 Paul shows that the truth, that is, the mystery of the Cross,¹ was withheld from the leaders of this age. Had they known what the Cross accomplished they

¹ For the idea of 'mystery' see my book, *The Glory of the Mystery and the Mystery of the Glory* (NCPI, 1998). We are not speaking of something esoteric, something cryptic, but of a seeable event which is interpreted thoroughly by the Scriptures of Old and New Testaments and which is comprehensible to the mind, but only if the Spirit gives spiritual comprehension (I Cor. 2:10–14).

would not have allowed it to happen. The Cross is a scandal to the Jew and intellectual foolishness to the Greek (I Cor. 1:22), yet in reality it is the power and wisdom of God (1:24). If this be the case then we need to see that the approach of Jesus to the death of the Cross is in the knowledge that it is the event of history which surpasses all others. The power of the Cross reaches into every nook and cranny of history and of creational living. We do not have a bare remembrance² of what happened but the reality of it being expressed in so many ways related to the living, once-slain Lamb.³ As we proceed to look at it we will discover this truth.

Christ's Anticipation of the Cross

We have covered most aspects of Christology and so the titles and ministries of the man Jesus, and this gives us a wide view of the Cross when we come to it. Jesus' rebuke to Peter on the way to Caesarea Philippi, 'Get thee behind me Satan', was uttered when Peter would have saved him from the way of the Cross. He had already rejected that temptation when battling in the wilderness with Satan. One John 3:8 tells us he was manifested to destroy the works of the Devil and this intention was in Jesus' mind. We saw in John 8:46ff., 12:31, 14:30–31, and 16:7–11 that he had Satan very much in mind. Mark 8:31, 9:31 and 10:33, along with Luke 24:26, 46 also show he was sure he must drink the cup of death (Mark 10:38). We saw that his transfiguration was with a view to the Cross and its action, as an 'exodus' which he was to 'accomplish' to lead his people to the true Promised Land. Whilst there is a reasonable view that in Gethsemane he drew back from the Cross, yet another reasonable view is that he only drew back from dying in the Garden so that he could die on the Cross.⁴

What must also be taken into consideration regarding Jesus' anticipation was what he knew lay beyond the Cross, namely Resurrection and Ascension and so the heavenly Reigning at God's right hand. Luke 9:51 says, 'When the days drew near for him to be received up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem', and 'to be received up', surely refers to the Ascension, as in Luke 24:26, 'enter into his glory'. The writer of Hebrews speaks of 'who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame'. The motivation of love for the Father and all mankind was what drove him on to the death of the Cross, but he did not see an end to himself in that Cross.

Now as we contemplate the Cross we must share in some measure his own contemplation and anticipation of that event. That is, he went to the Cross knowing it would be the salvation of the world in all time and for eternity. Until its mystery has been opened to us we cannot properly contemplate it. When it is opened then we realise what an amazing event it was, beyond all human conception or invention. Every motion of it was significant on a cosmic scale. Every element of evil was attacked and destroyed; every element of true morality came into force of action and put out of action every element of evil. Not only was it a single event which was successful in its aim, but also an action, the effects of which were to continue to act and react down through every age and into eternity where its work, so to speak, guarantees the triumph of love and holiness over every element which would hope to revive and do battle again with the majesty and humility of God. It is no wonder that he contemplated the dread

² What is a *bare* remembrance? Is there such a thing as an *empty* remembrance? This could only be when the mind is hostile to the remembrance. We do not make the remembrance of the Cross effective when we emotionalise our remembering. It is the same with what some call 'a bare substitution'. Could there be such a thing? Could Christ as a substitute be merely a forensic concept, or is Christ himself the substitute, and so his work of substitution dynamical?

³ See my *Beyond the Cross* (NCPI, 1987) written to show that the work of the Cross is continually effective in the whole cosmos as well as in human experience.

⁴ It can be well argued that Hebrews 5:7 refers to his prayer in Gethsemane, and that his statement 'my soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death' meant he was dying in the Garden, and desired to die on the Cross, in which case his prayer was answered, perhaps when an angel came and ministered to him. For some it seems incongruous that he who so fully anticipated the Cross should then hesitate in the Garden. What needs to be researched is what it was which made him sorrowful, *even unto death*.

hours of the Cross realistically, and ‘for the joy that was set before him’ pressed on to accomplish it.

THE ACTION OF THE CROSS

There are many aspects of the Work of Christ in the Cross. In fact there are so many that to deal with each in detail represents a mammoth task. Also, to live in the truth of each of these acts of Christ without our minds becoming blurred calls for a pure work of the Spirit in our hearts. Summed up, all the acts are related to salvation history, to the redemption of the human race and the deliverance of the creation—including the human race—from its bondage to corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God. We will now proceed to detail the redemptive action of Christ.

The Defeat of the Enemies of God and Man

The Destruction of the Enmity of the Serpent

What would have been the lot of the human race had Adam not rebelled against God as a result of the action of the Serpent in the garden of Eden, we can only conjecture. What we know is that the Serpent acted to destroy the relationship between Man and God. Whilst rebellious Man is the enemy of God (cf. Rom. 1:30; Eph. 2:2–3; Col. 1:21), God also set enmity between the woman and the Serpent (Gen. 3:15). Man became the slave of Satan (Eph. 2:1–3) and in thrall to him by virtue of the guilt of sin (Heb. 2:14–15; cf. Col. 2:14–15). It is clear that the hour of the Cross was at the same time the hour of the power of darkness, ‘When I was with you day after day in the temple, you did not lay hands on me. But this is your hour, and the power [authority] of darkness’. Christ had said Satan was coming (John 14:29–31) but that he had nothing on Christ. The thought surely is that whilst Satan had nothing on Christ because of his sinlessness, yet because Christ was to bear the sin of the world then Satan would have the power which lies in accusation. When Christ was made to be sin for the human race (cf. II Cor. 5:21), that is, to be the Sin-Bearer of all sins, then the ‘fierce Accuser’ began his damnable work. Because Christ bore the guilt of the world Satan lost his hold over humanity. We have to understand the sharpness and sting of accusation is the same as that of sin. By virtue of sin, Satan’s accusing destroys the spirit of Man, invading his conscience and bringing dreadful agony, also numbness of being. This suffering of sin and guilt Christ outworked in his holy self in the hours of the Cross. Psalms 22 and 69 have remarkable accounts of the sufferer being invaded or gnashed upon by these bestial enemies from the pit. The guilt-agony Christ took to himself and worked out until it was expended in his titanic suffering. Thus by his death Christ destroyed him who has the power of death, even the Devil, and so liberated from bondage those who were in thrall to Satan by virtue of the fear of Death.

Thus Christ destroyed the works of the Devil in toto. Satan has no word left with which to accuse any human being, though that person must hide under the work of the Cross. To know that a human being, in Christ, can come to guiltlessness is the most liberating of all truths. All demonic accusations, Satan’s fearful darts of indictments, are without basis. The Cross is where the Seed of Woman has crushed beneath his heel the prince of this dreadful world-system.

The Destruction of the Enmity of Sin

In the day of Man’s fall in Eden sin insinuated itself into the essential being of Man. The term ‘original sin’ defines the sin which was Adamic. The whole human race sinned in Adam’s act: when that one sinned all sinned. Such sin is not repeatable, but all sins which are committed in the body of humanity have this original sin as their source and basis. To call it a

propensity is at once a true but inadequate expression. The original sin was enough to bring the whole human race under the condemnation of death, thus firing it through the conscience, with incredible power of perversity. To sin is to become the very slave of sin. To have the conscience immured with rebellion and impurity is to sully the human spirit and bring it into a bondage from which it cannot be extricated by any known device or therapy. The moral spirit of Man is ensconced in an inescapable bondage.

Sin, Paul tells us, is of such nature that it can utilise the law to expand its powers of domination over the human spirit:

But sin, finding opportunity in the commandment, wrought in me all kinds of covetousness. Apart from the law sin lies dead. I was once alive apart from the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died; the very commandment which promised life proved to be death to me (Rom. 7:8–10).

If sin can take what is holy and incite to further sin, then how powerful is it! Proverbs 5:22 says it succinctly, ‘The iniquities of the wicked ensnare him, and he is caught in the toils of his sin’. Descriptions of sin abound,⁵ but sin must be seen as the opposite of faith in God. Its guilt cannot be separated from it. The guilt of sin is constituted of all the elements which the conscience senses and imparts to the human spirit when the act of sin takes place, such as pain, shame, pollution, heaviness, burden, loneliness, confusion, anger—and more. The sense of these things pervades the human spirit, bringing it into states of intolerable pain. Sin always acts against the coming of repentance, turning this dynamic act into fruitless remorse.

So we might go on about sin, and about the sins which keep Man in a vice-like grip of bondage. That all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God is a statement telling of sin’s horror and its deprivation of the glory Man once had, and which made Man, Man—the reflection of God in every way. The accusation of Man through the human conscience by Satan is what Christ went to the Cross to annul. Sin and the Serpent use the law for their nefarious purposes. The human ego reacts violently in order to establish its own righteousness —something we will examine when we talk about ‘the flesh’.

‘. . . you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.’ This was done by Christ bearing our sins in his body on the tree. It was by his being made to be sin. It was by his dying, the just for the unjust. It was by his act of putting away sins by the sacrifice of himself. It was by God’s condemning sin in Christ’s flesh that Man’s condemnation was annulled. It was by his offering for all time a single sacrifice for sins. It was by his being set forth as a propitiation for sins. It was by Christ’s bearing the wrath of God upon sin, the bearing of the guilt which constitutes the wrath of God, that Man was delivered from the guilt of the law, its wrath and condemnation, which was at the same time the wrath of God and His condemnation.⁶ To speak of propitiation being ‘immoral’, as though for Christ’s Person to suffer for all persons is indecent of God, is to have lost all genuine moral understanding. It is to say there is another way of forgiveness of sins, one apart from the Cross and (its) propitiation. His prayer on the Cross, ‘Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do’, speaks of the impossibility of human comprehension of the evil of sin. Man has to be forgiven even his lack of ability to see the sinfulness of sin.

When the active guilt of sin is borne by Christ so that the wrath upon it is upon him and his conscience, then sin is denuded of all its power. Only in this way can justification and forgiveness of sins obtain. Only that sin which Christ has destroyed at the Cross can be forgiven. That is, only the sin that has been atoned for can be forgiven. Christ as Man’s great

⁵ For example, Romans 1:18–32; 3:9–18; Mark 7:20–23; cf. Jeremiah 17:9; Ecclesiasts 7:29; Psalm 32:1–5; 51:1–9.

⁶ The Scriptures quoted here, and others are Matthew 1:21; I Peter 2:25; 3:18; II Corinthians 5:21; Hebrews 9:26, 28; 10:12; Romans 3:24; 8:3; I John 4:10. In Romans 1:18–32 God’s wrath upon sin is known in God giving Man up to his sin—verses 24, 26, and 28—and hence in Man suffering the guilt of his sin in its terrible elements felt in the conscience, as shown in Psalm 32:3–5. It was this guilt which is at the same time curse (cf. Gal. 3:10–13) which Christ bore, not only for Israel but the whole race.

High Priest has atoned for sin by the offering of his body. He has been set forth by God Himself as the propitiation for our sins, thus assuring us his sacrifice is authentic.

All of this is the equivalent of the curse being borne by Christ. The curse is primarily the wrath of God upon sin. It becomes the curse of the law for all who are under the law (cf. Gal. 3:10–13). The law was present at creation because Man was created by God in His image, and Man was never without law (cf. Gen. 26:5), though without the Sinaitic law, as such, until Sinai. The wrath of God as described in Romans 1:18ff. is Man bearing the guilt of sin. When Christ became curse for Man (Gal. 3:13) then the curse which was against Israel for its sin, as also the curse which is upon all mankind, was borne by Christ and so remitted.

The Flesh Which Was Crucified on the Cross

When Paul said, ‘we are convinced that one has died for all; therefore all have died’, he was speaking about the death, corporately, of all humanity. This did not mean there was not an individual death of each person in that body of humanity. He wrote:

I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me; and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me (Gal. 2:20).

This shows that a personal co-crucifixion occurred. This means the human person went through a crucifixion. Paul also said, ‘You have died, and your life is hid with Christ in God’. He spoke in Romans chapter 6 of this personal co-crucifixion. In 6:7 he said, ‘For he who has died is justified from sin’, meaning that the person had died a penal death and therefore was penally justified, that is, justified from the guilt of sin. In Galatians 6:14 Paul says that as a person he was crucified through the Cross to the world, and the world was crucified to him. In Galatians 5:24 he teaches, ‘And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires’. When these elements of crucifixion are put together they issue in the following, ‘I as a person was crucified with Christ, and so died to my old self and came alive, in Christ, to my new self. My union with the world was severed, as also its union with me was severed. In all this my old Adamically-affected self—my fleshly way of being and doing—was crucified, because my will, by crucifixion with Christ, now renounced my old (Adamic) way of life’. Paul also deals with this in Romans chapter 8 where he says in verse 12 that those crucified are longer debtors to the flesh to live after its demands. The power of the flesh has been annulled by the Cross. Of course we have to understand all this as having its reality only by faith, in faith. It is not something which happens of itself apart from Christ. It is only always so in Christ.

The outcome of the defeat of the human ego—the self-inverted ‘I’—is to defeat the power of selfishness, self-righteousness, and all ego endeavour in the affairs of the human race. The Cross has humbled the proud, the wilful, and the self-centredness of the old humanity and replaced it with a new humble, obedient, selfless humanity, the very humanity of Christ himself! In this is portrayed the enormous moral power of the Cross, or—better said—the enormous moral power of Christ.

The Cross Liberating Sinful Man from the Law

In Romans 7:1 (AV) Paul said, ‘the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth’. Other versions have ‘the law is binding on a person only during his life’. It amounts to the same thing: Man always lives under law. He is bound by it. Properly speaking, he is under God’s law, though *de facto* he may be under any one of many laws. Had Man not sinned then the law would have been only the law of love to him, though of course it would have been the law of holiness and righteousness, in the good sense. We have seen that sin fastens on the law to use it to incite sinful Man to further sin. Because law and the conscience are linked, and because, also, conscience and wrath are linked, therefore sin, the law, wrath and conscience form an entity which is at fierce enmity with fallen Man.

Paul speaks of the law as though it is against Man. In Romans 5:20 he wrote, ‘Law came in, to increase the trespass’. He does not mean that this is the whole story, but it is the story regarding sinful Man. In Romans 4:15 there is a partial explanation, ‘For the law brings wrath, but where there is no law there is no transgression’. This is much the same as Galatians 3:19 where Paul asks a question and answers it, ‘Why then the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the offspring should come to whom the promise had been made; and it was ordained by angels through an intermediary’. Up to this point, then, Paul is making the law out to be death-dealing, and he is correct. He has other things to say about the law which are not death-dealing, but at this point we see that when Christ was crucified he faced the dark and threatening nature of the law. His plea to the Father to forgive the sins of his persecutors had no basis if the law were not being attended to. The law is terrifying to the human conscience, and foreboding in horrible ways for the day of judgment. The law can demand no less than God demands and He demands no less than the human conscience does in the ultimate. This is because Man was made in the image of God and for him the holy law of the Being of God is a transcript of the manner of God, the way in which He subsists. This law is innate to Man’s creation as the image of God. Man in this law acts as God does in His Triune Being, as the Triune community.

It needs to be said that the law was not meant, primarily, to be death-dealing to Man. When because of sin law does its death-dealing work, it is in order to shut Man up to Christ as the way of justification: it is a schoolmaster to bring Man to Christ. Thus it is via the law Man is led to Christ, but the law could not do this unless Christ had met its stern demands and its implacable judgment in the Cross. Again this man ‘of mildest grace’ is cosmic in dealing with the everlasting law through everlasting love. Such was his power in the Cross. Propitiating God in His holy wrath is no less than propitiating the law through meeting the demands of the law. Christ passes through the death of sin in order that Man may be justified from sin.

The Destruction of Death in the Death of Christ

Death is demanded of Man for his sin; sin original and sin enacted historically against God. All did sin in Adam, and all have sinned in their own persons (Rom. 5:12; 3:23). Sin original and otherwise is lethal; ‘in the day you eat of it you shall die’; ‘the wages of sin is death’. ‘Apart from the law sin lies dead. I was once alive apart from the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died; the very commandment which promised life proved to be death to me’ (Rom. 7:8–10). David’s statement is true of all sinners, ‘For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done that which is evil in thy sight, so that thou art justified in thy sentence and blameless in thy judgment’ (Ps. 51:4). In the ultimate every sin, and all sin, is against God, and until God works to justify the sinner nothing of justification can be accomplished.

Death without the judgment of sin, that is, without the sting of sin whose strength (*dunamis*) is by the law, is not death as we conceive it, being sinners. ‘Perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with torment.’ In writing these words John the Apostle has in mind the same thing as the writer of Hebrews had when he said, in effect, that men and women through fear of death passed their lives in bondage. Fear of death is fear of judgment. In this it has to do with torment, the torment which is now in the guilty mind and which will find its fullness in the execution of judgment.

When Christ became sin for Man, when he bore our sins in his own body on the Tree, when he made a single sacrifice for sins for ever, then he withdrew the sting of death. He withdrew the death of death from the condemned sinner. To quote John Owen, this was ‘the death of death in the death of Christ’. This is made manifest in Christ’s resurrection, but we must see that the Resurrection was not something which happened after the Cross and apart from the Cross, but that Christ so destroyed sin—that sting of death—that death was destroyed on the Cross, that ‘Death is swallowed up in victory’,⁷ the victory wrought on the Cross.

⁷ cf. I Corinthians 15:54; Isaiah 25:8; Hoes 13:14; II Corinthians 5:4, ‘death is swallowed up in life’.

So, then, the victory of the Cross has much to do with the action of the Resurrection, though the Cross is never apart from the Resurrection. Paul's statement of Romans 8:10, 'But if Christ is in you, although your bodies are dead because of sin, your spirits are alive because of righteousness [justification]', which can also be translated, 'But if Christ is in you, although your bodies are doomed to death because of sin, yet the Holy Spirit is life-giving because of justification'. This also fits with Romans 4:24–25, 'Jesus our Lord, who was put to death for our trespasses and raised for our justification'. Here the work of the Cross and Resurrection are one in the lethal and practical defeat of death. It is in the midst of this Cross that Jesus can say to the penitent thief alongside him, 'today you will be with me in Paradise', and thus assure him of the defeat of sin's death, and the victory as 'death is swallowed up in victory'.

The Cosmic Defeat of Evil: The Reconciliation of All Things

Paul assures us in Colossians 1:21–22, 'And you, who once were estranged and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and irreproachable before him'. Here Paul is talking about universal reconciliation of Man with God, of which he talks in II Corinthians 5:19, 'that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation'. Again, in Ephesians 2:13–18, he speaks firstly of Man's reconciliation to God by the blood of Christ, and, at the same time, of the reconciliation of Israel and the nations:

But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near in the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who has made us both one, and has broken down the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law of commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby bringing the hostility to an end. And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near; for through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father.

When we ask, 'How is this reconciliation effected?' we are pointed to the death of Christ, to reconciliation being effected 'in his body of flesh by his death'. We are pointed to having been brought near 'in the blood of Christ'. We are told that 'in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them'. The not counting of the trespasses was because of Christ's bearing those sins to extinction. There was nothing to count against Man! The cause of the separation between God and Man was sin, 'your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you so that he does not hear' (Isa. 59:2). It is sin that alienates, but because of His eternal covenant with Man, God took the initiative in reconciling Man to Himself.

What we must not miss is that the action of the Cross was cosmic. To destroy the works of the Devil it must be cosmic. To defeat the evil powers in the heavenly places the action must be cosmic. To sum up all things in Christ, that is, to unify and reconcile them all in an everlasting unity, is the vast work of the Cross. It embraces all things. It is not just a Cross to save Man from the consequences of his sin, but it is to quicken him into immortality, to raise him and seat him in the heavenlies in Christ. First the dissonance of evil men and creatures must be destroyed before the eternal harmony can break forth in all creation. To grasp what we have just said as reality means the mystery must be unfolded to us. It means we must see the ultimate *telos*—the completion of all things.

The Cross as the Outworking of the Moral Glory of God Is the Revelation of the God of Grace

It is clear from John's Gospel that the act of the Cross is the act of God's glory. This can be seen when the following passages are contemplated, namely 12:23, 27–28, 13:31f., and 17:1–5. At the same time we must see that God's glory is not merely to be thought of in terms of light, of radiance, of pure shining, but of the moral glory of which these elements are manifestations.

Isaiah, in the temple, saw the radiance of God in the cloud of glory, but the message of the seraphim was ‘The whole earth is filled with his glory’. Had this not been told to Isaiah he might not have thought it, seeing so much evil was upon the earth as well as in his own heart. For the earth to be filled with the glory of God means His government is over all the earth, and it is moral governance. In speaking of the Cross as the outshining of God’s glory Calvin has this to say:

So whatever ignominy appears in the cross which could bewilder believers, Christ testifies that the same cross is glorious to Him. The immediately following clause, *And God is glorified in him*, is put in for confirmation. For it was a paradox that the glory of the Son of man arose from a death humanly ignominious and even accursed before God. He shows therefore how He would win glory from such a death—because He glorifies God the Father. For in the cross of Christ, as in a splendid theatre, the incomparable goodness of God is set before the whole world. The glory of God shines, indeed, in all creatures on high and below, but never more brightly than in the cross, in which there was a wonderful change of things (*admirabilis rerum conversio*)—the condemnation of all men was manifested, sin blotted out, salvation restored to men; in short, the whole world was renewed and all things restored to order.⁸

When Moses desired to see God’s full glory he was told such a seeing would prove lethal to him. Human flesh cannot bear that full glory. He was told in understandable terms what was the glory of God. So Exodus 34:6–7:

The LORD passed before him, and proclaimed, ‘The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children’s children, to the third and the fourth generation.’

Moral being has to do with will and choice. It is evident that God wills and chooses in conformity with His own Being. When, then, He pronounces His glory to Moses, He is declaring to him what He is in Himself. Moses needed to know the nature of God so that he could lead the people of Israel to the Promised Land. He needed the moral power to do this. God disclosed to him His moral power. Each term and phrase should be pondered, meditated upon, contemplated so that the glory of God should be truly known. The Book of Deuteronomy is, in a sense, a commentary upon this revelation of Exodus 34:6–7.⁹ The question that arises with us in the Cross is how can God state He is this Person of Being, of mercy, of grace, of longsuffering, of steadfast love and faithfulness, of forgiveness of sins, and yet so holy that He cannot forgive the impenitent and will ensure that the entail of sin makes its impression upon the guilty, rebellious human race? The answer is that God cannot let out—so to speak—His propitiatory gift of sacrifice to the human race (Lev. 17:11) unless He somewhere at the centre of creation provides a universal sacrifice to provide the basis for all His moral glory. He cannot forgive the infraction of His law by morally unbased, gratuitous forgiveness. The Moslem claims that God is merciful and compassionate, but then on what grounds does he make this claim? Only on the grounds of His immutable Being which can decide *as* it wills, and *what* it wills, without regard to true morality? No: it must be in the Cross that God works out the moral judgments *in* the Person of His Son as also *on* the Person of His Son. God cannot be seen to ignore His law or make a way around it as opponents of ‘bare substitution’ claim its exponents are doing. They claim this wrongly. The agony and the anguish of the Cross is the God of true (moral) glory working out the propitiatory grace in the sacrifice of Christ. Nowhere can we find a finer commentary on this act than the 53rd chapter of Isaiah. In terms of a satisfied and quieted conscience, only the Cross can establish this state.

⁸ *The Gospel According to St John 11 – 21 and The First Epistle of John*, Calvin’s Commentaries, trs by T. H. L. Parker, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1974, p. 68.

⁹ Some references to this disclosure of God regarding His moral glory are as follows: Numbers 14:18; Deuteronomy 4:31; Nehemiah 9:17; Psalm 86:15; 89:30–34; 103:8; 145:8; Jonah 4:2. There are many references to this revelation, especially those which are linked with His covenantal nature.

The Cross Is the Outworking and Fulfilment of the Everlasting Covenant of Grace

None of what we have written in this Study makes true theological sense except in the light of covenant. We have seen above what the moral glory of God is, but we need to see that is exactly the same as covenant grace. This covenant is first the innate nature of God, the manner in which the Triune God subsists. Man by creation is in covenant relationship with God because he is the image of that innate Divine relationship of the three Persons. Man and God call unto one another as deep calls unto deep. Man's affinity with God is covenantal. The breaking of the creational covenant by Man is not the breaking of it by God. He remains covenantally faithful to the human race. The outworking of this with the human race is seen in the relationship He has with Israel. It is in the Cross that this paradigm of covenant with Israel becomes universal, or sends us back to the original universal covenant. Whether we see the elect as being the Israel of God, that is, Israel after the Spirit and the Church after the Spirit as one, does not much matter. At the Cross the infinite patience of God and His holy love for all humanity is enacted and effects the *telos* of love, covenant love. This is, as we indicated above, the reconciliation of all things, the renewal of all things, the glorification, sanctification and perfection of all things. That is why we say Christ suffered the pains of cosmic redemption, the suffering for the whole creation. That is why he cried the cry of dereliction, 'My God! My God! Why hast thou forsaken me?' This is the utter judgment of sin by holy wrath, and it cannot be described or articulated in any other way.

That is why the Epistle to the Hebrews talks about 'the blood of the covenant' or the 'blood of the everlasting covenant' as a powerful and holy thing. The blood of the covenant is not to be despised since by it His people enter into His holy of holies (10:26; cf. 9:20; 10:19–22). It is the blood of the everlasting covenant, for this covenant made with creation was never doomed to cessation, but through Christ brings to life in his Resurrection the true family of God, for his sacrifice is the basis of the Resurrection and his eternal being as the Good Shepherd. By blood—by the giving of life in sacrificial death—Christ establishes forever what the Sinaitic covenant in animal blood could not establish, the permanency of the eternal covenant and the everlasting flock of the Shepherd.

CONCLUSION: THE POWER OF THE WORD OF THE CROSS

In one sense we have only touched the fringe of the *work* of the Cross. That this work was a vast one can be seen by what is written above, although in fact the *work* is far beyond that comparatively meagre description. That the work God intended should be done on the Cross was completed is clear from Jesus' cry 'It is finished!' Yes, but the *work* of the Cross establishes the *word* of the Cross. We mean the gospel was made by the *work* of the Cross and so the gospel is the *word* of the Cross. The *word* of the Cross is always the enactment of the *work* of the Cross to the eyes and ears of the hearers. Paul can say that the Lord's Supper is setting forth Christ's death until he comes (I Cor. 11:26). He tells the Galatians that through his preaching 'Christ was set forth as crucified among you'. That is why 'the *word* of the Cross is to them that are perishing foolishness, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God'. Because the *word* of the Cross conveys the *work* of the Cross it can be said to be sacramental.

In the light of this it must be maintained that the work of the Cross is in reality Christ himself, Christ crucified. Our faith is in this One, and so is in his work. In him we participate in his work. The gospel he has formed by his Incarnation, Cross and Resurrection goes on being the power of God and the wisdom of God. Whilst, strictly speaking, it is not our subject here, yet we cannot close off without stating that it is through the Cross we have been forgiven, justified, sanctified, glorified and perfected.¹⁰ Even so, forgiveness, justification, sanctification,

¹⁰ cf. I Corinthians 1:30–31; 6:9–11; Hebrews 10:10–14.

glorification and perfection are actions of the Cross which continue in the experiences of our lives, in our constant living.¹¹ Thus the *word* of the Cross *was* not only powerful for our redemption, but *is* continually powerful for the same. It ensures the *telos* and our participation in it.

¹¹ For this thought see my *Beyond the Cross* (op. cit.). Note the tenses of the crucifixion of persons is always in either the aorist or perfect. In Galatians 2:20 the verb is 'I have been crucified', so that there is a sense of the effects of the crucifixion continuing in the present. Even so, there is no room for the crucified person to take any initiative in being crucified.

The Person & Work of Christ: The Incarnation—4

THE WORK OF THE RESURRECTION

For the moment we will define the works of Christ as his Incarnation, Cross, Resurrection, Ascension, Reigning and Return or Parousia (appearing). We know that Christ did many works (John 5:36; 14:11, 12; 21:25) and in John 14:12 he told his disciples they would do even greater works, but none was ever equipped or qualified to do the six works we have named above. Some would see the Ascension and Reigning as one work: it does not matter. Our point is that we cannot evaluate any one work above the other because they constitute the whole work of Christ.¹ No one work could be valid without the other works having been done. We must not ask, 'Which is the most important?' because only together do all the works have their own validity. In this study we are seeking to understand the meaning of the Resurrection.²

All the six works of Christ are the works of salvation, the fulfilment of what was promised by God in the Old Testament. Not only do they concern the salvation of persons but also the cosmic work which Christ effects in order to bring the whole creation to sanctification, glorification and perfection. We can see, then, that the order of these works is both natural and as it should be. We should also see that all the works are indispensable. Just as Christ's Incarnation led to his ministry and so the Cross, so the Cross would be an unfinished work without the Resurrection, as it also would be meaningless apart from the Cross. Christ had to ascend in order to be the anointed King on the throne with God and to reign until the time for his Parousia, and so the reconciliation and summing of all things—the completion of God's plan for creation.

If we can take this view then we see that all history is the story of God's activities within His creation, and they are all with a view to the climax which He has planned. Linked with this understanding is the eternal covenant which God has with creation, for all things proceed from that covenant.

CLEARING THE GROUND FURTHER FOR OUR UNDERSTANDING OF THE RESURRECTION

Many readers of the New Testament, including some critics of it, feel that the Resurrection cannot be valid unless its happening can be proved. It would take a lot to prove it scientifically. Because it is a happening unprecedented in history some feel proof cannot be

¹ Strictly speaking we should speak of the first work of Christ as that of working with the Father and the Holy Spirit in creation. This can be seen in John 1:1–5, Colossians 1:15–18, and Hebrews 1:1–3. It was this 'Word' or 'Son' by whom God created (cf. I Cor. 8:6). We gather that the Word–Son not only created but also sustains all things, and indeed that all things were 'created *through* him and *for* him', 'for' here meaning 'unto' him; that is, he is their goal. We know that the Son must have been in all the action of God. Abraham 'rejoiced that he was to see Christ's day', and in fact saw it and he was glad. Revelation 19:10 says 'the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy' so that doubtless all the prophets knew of Christ in some measure or another (cf. I Pet. 1:10–12). It is also clear that Christ was with Israel in the wilderness (cf. I Cor. 10:1–5). We conclude that the one we call 'Jesus of Nazareth' was and is always in the work of God. Thus his Incarnation did not begin abruptly but as part of the historic continuity of the work the Son was always, and is always, doing.

² We will use the capital 'R' when referring to Christ's Resurrection and lower case when referring generally to the matter of resurrection.

forthcoming. Others seek to reconcile the various accounts of the happening of the Resurrection in the Gospels thinking that thereby the Resurrection will be credible. Some seek to find useful material regarding this event from the Acts, Epistles and the Revelation. What we do find is that there are those who claimed to be witnesses of the Resurrection. It is clear from their demeanour that they believed the happening of the Resurrection. I Corinthians 15:3–11 lists these witnesses. A witness to the truth of anything is not one who necessarily proves it. Some theologians claim to believe the Resurrection, not as an actual happening but as the concept which did and can enliven anyone who believes in the power of Christ. This does not satisfy those who seek material proof of an unprecedented happening, and it does not satisfy those who see it is a matter of faith—faith in the testimony of witnesses, and faith in the fact that the living Church developed out of that event. As we go through our study of the Resurrection we will see that it has many implications and we will see that to faith this happening has many elements of significance. Without seeking to evade the issue—but rather clarify it—we say that all matters of faith result from understanding the revelation given of what are termed ‘mysteries’. There is ‘the mystery of the Cross’, otherwise the Cross happening would just be the killing of Jesus of Nazareth, and have no apparent deep meaning and purpose, nor any outcome other than that which issues from martyrdom for any given cause. Martyrs are not confined to Christianity.

Another point needs to be made clear. In history many cultures have had a sort of belief in an existence after death. The ideas are many, but none approximates to the Christian idea which grew out of the Resurrection happening. It is true that Greek thinking saw the material body as a clog on the spirit of a person which dwelt within it, and when the person died the spirit began an existence of freedom from that which is material. It is considered by some that Jews did not think of immortality, but of some kind of shadowy existence after death. Most would have agreed with Paul’s statement of I Timothy 6:15–16, ‘and this will be made manifest at the proper time by the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone has immortality and dwells in unapproachable light, whom no man has ever seen or can see’. They would have agreed that ‘God alone has immortality’. Certainly Man was mortal, his sin in Eden sealing that mortality.³ At the same time Paul in I Corinthians 15:3–4 claims that Christ’s Resurrection was in accordance with the Scriptures, ‘For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures’.

We conclude from this statement—‘in accordance with the scriptures’ that the Old Testament in some way anticipated the Resurrection of Messiah, although no explicit texts spell this out, as such.⁴ Even so, both the Cross and the Resurrection were in accordance with the Old Testament writings. Proof texts, as such, do not occur, but we do not need to look for such. Christ evidently convinced the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, and then, later, the apostles in the upper room⁵ when he showed them ‘in all the scriptures the things concerning himself’. ‘In accordance with the scriptures’ must mean that the idea of Christ’s Resurrection was there as a thrust of the Old Testament Scriptures as also it was in regard to Messiah being crucified. There is no question that the apostles were convinced by Christ that the Old

³ It seems that Man, in innocence, was not mortal in the sense that if he did not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil he would not die. Rather he was invited to eat of the tree and attain immortality, which innately he did not have. Not essentially immortal, he was always dependent upon God for continued existence, and life would always be a gift for his taking.

⁴ For further treatment of this material see a previous Study, entitled ‘Christ in All the Scriptures: The Preincarnate Yet Always Coming Christ’.

⁵ This is a subject which has exercised Man, the term ‘in accordance with the scriptures’. Here I Peter 1:10–12 should be consulted and worked through. ‘The prophets who prophesied of the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired about this salvation; they inquired what person or time was indicated by the Spirit of Christ within them when predicting the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glory. It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things which have now been announced to you by those who preached the good news to you through the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look.’

Testament witnessed to both these events. In Revelation 1:17–18, John fell down before Christ, so overcome was he with his transcendent glory. ‘When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. But he laid his right hand upon me, saying, “Fear not, I am the first and the last, and the living one; I died, and behold I am alive for evermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades.”’ ‘We do not need explicit proof texts from the Old Testament to verify the Death and Resurrection of Jesus, for the Messiah himself speaks to us. He spoke to Martha saying, ‘I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and whoever lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?’ (John 11:25, 26). This certainly links with both Revelation 1:17–18 (above) and Revelation 19:10, when John was with the angel, ‘Then I fell down at his feet to worship him, but he said to me, “You must not do that! I am a fellow servant with you and your brethren who hold the testimony of Jesus. Worship God.”’ ‘John then adds what he knows to be the fact, so long acquaintance has he had both with Christ and the prophets, ‘*For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy*’. There is the true sense, then, of the phrase ‘in accordance with the scriptures’.

THE NATURE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF CHRIST’S RESURRECTION

The Resurrection of the End Time Dependent upon Christ’s Resurrection

Under the heading of ‘The Nature and Significance of Christ’s Resurrection’ we could write many a book and not exhaust the matter.

First of all we must see that primarily our subject is Christ’s Resurrection and not ‘the resurrection at the last day’ as Martha described it (John 11:24); but the two are strongly linked and we need to see their connection. In I Corinthians 15:16–18 Paul ties in the resurrection of believers with the Resurrection of Christ, ‘For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised. If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished.’ Christ’s Resurrection assures a general resurrection. Compare John 5:28–29, ‘Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come forth, those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of judgment’.

Because of His Resurrection from the Dead, Christ Is the Judge of All Humanity

The thought of John 5:28–29—especially as to his being Judge of all humanity—is filled out in the following verses (25–29):

Truly, truly, I say to you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself, and has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of man. Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come forth, those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of judgment.

We recognise that the Lordship and Kingship of Christ in the New Testament come with the presupposition that to be over all the nations is to be Judge of all. This thought is present powerfully in Daniel 7:9–27, a passage we cannot spare time or space to fit in with this present thesis of Christ’s being Judge.⁶

⁶ In Daniel 7:10 (cf. 7:26–27) the statement is made ‘the court sat in judgment, and the books were opened’. The statement, ‘the books were opened’ appears in Revelation 20:12 in the context of the final judgment of all creatures. In Daniel 7:14 the Son of man is given Kingship of all nations, and presumably is their Judge. In the end the saints receive the Kingdom and so the Son of man must be Judge.

His being appointed Judge is repeated in Acts 10:39–42:

And we are witnesses to all that he did both in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree; but God raised him on the third day and made him manifest; not to all the people but to us who were chosen by God as witnesses, who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. And he commanded us to preach to the people, and to testify that he is the one ordained by God to be judge of the living and the dead.

It is obvious here that because Christ in the judgment took the sins of the people, he is the one competent to judge all humanity, since he has taken the judgment of their sins himself.

Acts 17:29–31 confirms this principle. Paul has been talking about the idolatry of the Gentiles and says that the time of God overlooking their ignorance has come to an end with Jesus Christ's Resurrection:

Being then God's offspring, we ought not to think that the Deity is like gold, or silver, or stone, a representation by the art and imagination of man. The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all men everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed, and of this he has given assurance to all men by raising him from the dead.

The matter of Christ's being made Judge of all fills us with awe. Luther certainly had this idea fixed in his mind to his terror, and it was not until he knew Christ as the victim for the sinner that he knew true peace. Nor does the awe wane from seeing him as Judge and King when we know we were crucified with him.

The Principle of Death and Resurrection

In the New Testament we are told that because of Christ (i) death has already been defeated, 'When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory." "O death, where is thy victory? O death, where is thy sting?" The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law.' (See I Cor. 15:54–56; cf. Isa. 25:8; Rev. 21:4.); (ii) that the last enemy yet to be defeated is death, 'The last enemy to be destroyed is death' (I Cor. 15:26); and (iii) humanity is in bondage to Satan through fear of death (Heb. 2:14–15).

Undoubtedly Man feels the matter of death. This century has seen more violent death than any other. More people are dying daily than ever died before, daily. Later we will talk a little about moral/spiritual death experienced through sin (Rom. 5:12; Eph. 2:5), and about moral/spiritual resurrection through baptism identifying us with the Resurrection of Christ (Rom. 6:1–10; Gal. 2:20; Col. 3:3), but we can see the vast implications of Christ's Death for all his people.

What we do have to see is that what happened on the Cross and in the Resurrection was such action by Christ which made the two events to be the one in what they effected:

- (i) the moral/spiritual resurrection in this life of baptised believers, and
- (ii) the ultimate bodily resurrection of the same believers, at which point they will have bodies 'like unto his body of glory' (Phil. 3:21).

CHRIST THE FIRST FRUITS OF THOSE WHO HAVE FALLEN ASLEEP

Christ being the 'first fruits' means that when he arose from the dead he was the first fruits of the larger harvest of the Resurrection which was/is to follow at the general resurrection (I Cor. 15:22). Because of the truth that all believers—the Church—are 'in Christ' (*en Christo*) so his Resurrection is the means and the guarantee of the resurrection of all believers. As 'all' die in Adam,

so, too, ‘all’ will rise in Christ. He is ‘the first-born from the dead’ (Col. 1:18), and as such the proof that others will rise. It is also the indication that he is the one who is pre-eminent over those who will rise. He has gained their resurrection by his Cross and his own Resurrection. He is their Lord.

THE RESURRECTION AND THE GLORY OF GOD

In the text which follows I have endeavoured to give various aspects of the Resurrection of Christ. Much of this material has been taken from my book *All Cry, ‘Glory!’* which is in the process of publication. It treats the glory of the six events we mentioned above—the Incarnation, the Cross, Resurrection, Ascension, Reigning and the Parousia to come. I have abridged some of the material but believe it will be useful for comprehending the Resurrection of Christ and our own resurrection.

The Cross and the Resurrection

A clear link of the work of the Cross and what we may call ‘the work of the Resurrection’ is found in I Corinthians 15:3–4:

For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures.

The Cross and Resurrection are coupled to make ‘the gospel’ (15:1), and both are ‘in accordance with the scriptures’. The two, together, are of ‘first importance’, in fact the importance is balanced, for both the Death and the Resurrection are ‘of first importance’. This principle is found in Romans 4:25 where Christ ‘was put to death for our trespasses and raised for our justification’. It is also the thrust of I Peter 3:21, ‘Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a clear conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ’. In salvation the works of the Cross and Resurrection are wedded.⁷

As we set out the whole work of the Cross as the action of the glory of the Father, as also the glory of the Son and of the Spirit, we can also argue here that the work of the Resurrection is also a work of the glory of the Father—‘Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father’ (Rom. 6:4). For the moment we will leave the phrase ‘the glory of the Father’ and see elsewhere that it was the Father who raised him. In I Peter 1:21 the apostle wrote that ‘God . . . raised him from the dead and gave him glory’. Leaving aside for the moment the statements in the Epistles that God raised him from the dead, we have twenty-one statements of the Resurrection in the Book of Acts, eleven of which state explicitly that it was God who raised him from the dead.⁸

To go back to Romans 6:4: the emphasis here is on ‘by [or *through*] the glory of the Father’ which can be taken to mean that majesty and power by which God rules all things and effects His will. It is thus a manifestation or action of that glory—a manifestation to be taken into account: it has happened in history! It is not a development from one stage of humanity to another. At the same time the word ‘Father’ speaks of Christ’s Sonship, and so we can speak of a ‘relational glory’—the Father raises the Son by His glory: it is in the interests of Divine Fatherly glory to raise the Son. In passing we note that in Romans 8:18–30 there is a working of God to bring about the glory of ‘the sons’ which is linked in principle with resurrection—

⁷ Generally it is thought that the act of the Cross alone is deemed to be forensic in that it, alone, brings justification to the person who believes. However the two quotes above—Romans 4:25 and I Peter 3:21—make it clear that the Resurrection plays a forensic part.

⁸ Acts 2:24, 31, 32; 3:15; 4:2, 10, 33; 5:30; 10:40; 13:30, 33, 34, 37; 17:31.

‘the redemption of the body’—but our focus is not on this parallel for the moment. Here, in Romans 6:4, ‘the glory of the Father’ is to bring to fullness the Sonship of Jesus.

JESUS RAISED FROM THE DEAD IS AN EXTRAORDINARY MATTER

Because of our Christian history, theology and creeds, the Resurrection of Jesus seems to be *natural* enough. In a sense we have been indoctrinated through 2,000 years in the idea that this was normal and natural enough, but it wasn’t and isn’t! No resurrection had ever happened, and apart from Christ’s none other has happened, not, anyway, for human, scientific examination. It would have been shocking whenever or wherever it happened. Even today such an event would be traumatic to viewers—if they could believe what they saw! That God may give immortality to a person may have been thought possible by the translation of Enoch and Elijah—in regard to whom nothing of resurrection is mentioned—but such a conclusion must be suspended seeing we know nothing of their state. We would be surprised, then, to discover how much our thinking has coloured our view of how we think the Jews thought or ought to have thought. Given that a number of Jews believed in the resurrection of the dead, this does not represent them all; and we may have to rethink the Scriptures of the Old Testament, and in particular those passages which seem to speak of a resurrection from the dead.⁹ Did anyone ever think of Messiah as one who was to be crucified, let alone be raised from the dead?

However, in I Corinthians 15:3–4 Paul does not say that the second element of the gospel was ‘the Resurrection’ which was to be believed, but that Christ ‘was buried, that he was raised in accordance with the scriptures’. In other words it is Christ’s Resurrection which was to be believed and not a general resurrection. So in Romans 10:9 it is stated, ‘if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved’. It is the Resurrection of Christ which was to be believed (Acts 2:36; Rom. 10:9).

Despite the fact that Jesus had at least three times referred to the reality that he would be killed and rise again (Mark 8:31; 9:31; 10:34), the disciples did not expect his Resurrection.¹⁰ Whilst the four Gospel accounts give details of that event they also show the disciples’ unbelief that it had happened until Christ appeared to two of them on the road to Damascus, to more of them in the upper room, and then, eight days later, to Thomas.¹¹

The Resurrection in Christ’s case is not a resuscitation as was the case with the reviving to life of the boy in both Elijah and Elisha’s cases, or the raising from the dead of Jairus’ daughter, the son of the widow of Nain, and Lazarus. They were raised from death only, eventually, to die again. In Romans 6:9 Paul writes, ‘we know that Christ being raised from the dead will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him’. Nothing could ever again take Christ into death. As he told John the Divine, ‘I died and behold I am alive for evermore’. Paul adds, ‘The death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God’ (Rom. 6:10).

Christ’s Resurrection Glory

We saw, above, that Christ was ‘raised from the dead by the glory of the Father’. In Ephesians the Father is ‘the Father of glory’. We see that the Father’s glory is His power by

⁹ See, for example, the article ‘Jesus and the Resurrection’ by Ian Pennicook in the NCTM 1998 Pastors’ School notes under the title of ‘The Apostolic Faith in Today’s World’.

¹⁰ There are references to the general resurrection from the dead by Jesus, but these three references are to his own Resurrection.

¹¹ Luke 24:22–24; John 20:8, and I Corinthians 15:5 seem to indicate there was some sort of belief in Jesus’ Resurrection, but it was not conclusive until his appearance to the two disciples going to Emmaus, the ten in the upper room, and the later appearance to Thomas.

which he raised Christ, but it is a moral power, the power which will not let His holy one see corruption. Psalm 16:9–10 has, ‘Therefore my heart is glad, and my soul [Heb. “my glory”] rejoices; my body also dwells secure. For thou dost not give me up to Sheol, or let thy godly one see the Pit.’ In Acts 2:27 Peter quotes Psalm 16:10 as, ‘For thou wilt not abandon my soul to Hades, nor let thy Holy One see corruption’, and in Acts 13:35 Paul quotes the same verse as ‘Thou wilt not let thy Holy One see corruption’. Peter and Paul quote the LXX, the Greek Septuagint.

When we say the Father’s glory is ‘a moral power’ we must see that just as His moral glory was the outworking of that glory which God showed to Moses in Exodus 34:6–7, so the Resurrection was also the outworking of *the same moral glory*. If death had in any way impinged on Christ, and had in any way been able to hold him, then the victory of the Cross would have been cancelled. It would have meant that the moral power exercised by Christ to destroy sin by taking its guilt into himself would have been defeated. Satan and his evil powers would also have been victorious over him. Whilst it is true that God raised Jesus from the dead by His power, it must be seen that it was moral power and not simply supernatural power. His mercy, his steadfast love, his abounding faithfulness and forgiveness were all involved in the Resurrection.

Paul’s comment on verse 37 in Acts 13, ‘but he whom God raised up saw no corruption’, seems to infer that Christ’s physical body did not corrupt. He said that David ‘saw corruption’. The *fact* of the Resurrection is not dependent upon the *mode* of Resurrection, but the mode would be dependent upon the act of the Father’s glory; that is, as to whether the body experienced corruption or not. On the one hand we must insist that Christ died a physical death, and on the other that he was not mastered by this: certainly not in the way all human beings die. For Christ to die humanly does not necessarily have to mean what it means for all human beings, especially when we read what he said:

For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life, that I may take it again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again; this charge I have received from my Father (John 10:17, 18).

He relates to his death and rising in a way no other human being had or could have done. We conclude that the mystery of his death is only partially opened to us. In passing we note that the Cross was with a view to the Resurrection, something we see time and again in the text of the New Testament.

In Luke 24:26 Jesus asked the two disciples, ‘Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?’ Paul and Barnabas later used this sort of argument (Acts 17:3). Paul’s statement in Romans 1:4, ‘designated Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness¹² by his resurrection from the dead’, certainly speaks of Christ being glorified as to his designation and position. The ‘enter into his glory’ of Luke 24:26 can mean that his body was glorified, that he received his high position of authority as Paul elaborates it in Ephesians 1:19–23. Glory is always associated with authority and rule. Even so, our minds are directed to what Paul calls ‘his body of glory’ in Philippians 3:21. We know that on the one hand Jesus appeared in a locked room, and on the other he ate a piece of broiled fish (Luke 24:42–43); so the matter of Resurrection glory is still a mystery.

At the same time we must consider that the act and event of the Cross was the actuation and revelation of the glory of God, of the Triune God; and in the matter of glory the Resurrection

¹² Christ could be spoken of here as having been raised by the Spirit of holiness but the term does not mean ‘his—Christ’s—spirit of holiness’. Romans 8:11 does not say the Spirit raised Christ from the dead, but the remainder of the verse states that people will be raised by the Spirit. Generally it is ‘God’ or ‘the Father’ who is said to have resurrected Christ. In the three Markan references to the Cross and Resurrection it is simply said that Jesus would rise from the dead.

was one with the Cross, as it was also one with both the Ascension and the Son's Reigning at the right hand of the Father.

What must have struck the apostles and others with them was the glory of the Resurrection, not simply in terms of Christ's body being enhanced with radiance, but the incredible fact that he had overcome death by the work of the Father, and now 'opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers'. It was not only the vindication of God's moral glory which had worked successfully at the Cross, but the expression of God's moral glory which was effecting the Messiahship and Lordship of His Son, the Man Jesus, and is the continued action of that glory in his Exaltation and Reigning. Jesus was not made Lord *after* the events of the Cross and Resurrection but Messiah and Lord *by* these events. His victory was the outworking of the glory of God filling all things; that is, the rule of the Father and the Son had now been shown to be over all things. Believing Man could now see and share the glory of God.

THE POWER OF CHRIST'S RESURRECTION FOR MAN AND HIS GLORY

Any human being, and not necessarily a Christian one, would be staggered by the claim that Christ rose from the dead, bodily, without the corruption of his body. We have seen that many theologians cannot begin to believe that this event took place, and so the Resurrection of Christ as an historical reality has been rationalised: to these theologians it never happened. It is obvious even from a first reading of the Gospels and Acts that a host of Christ's followers believed he did indeed die, was buried and rose again, the stone closing his tomb being rolled away by supernatural means. His Resurrection was proclaimed by angelic creatures¹³ who said, 'Why do you seek the living among the dead?' In Matthew 28:2–6 an angel whose appearance 'was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow' spoke to the women, 'Do not be afraid; for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for he has risen.' In John's Gospel Mary Magdalene saw first the two angels who were in the tomb, and then Jesus in the garden. In Mark's account the women see a man dressed in a white robe, who tells them, 'Do not be amazed; you seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen, he is not here; see the place where they laid him.' We see visible celestial glory attending this momentous event, for it was not intended to appear as some quiet, natural happening. The first man in all history had risen from the dead, and God attested to this amazing reality, though of course only to faith.¹⁴

We remember that the disciples had been told by Jesus that he would rise. Hence the message by the two men in dazzling raiment to the women at the tomb, 'Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, that the Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified,¹⁵ and on the third day rise' (Luke 24:6–7). When the women told the disciples, 'these words seemed to them as an idle tale, and they did not believe them'.

It is now a matter of history that millions have believed in the Resurrection. When its truth comes freshly to us, we can scarcely believe it, so significant is it. The terror and dread of death hanging over the human race for millenniums of time is now no longer a powerful factor where the Resurrection is believed, for it assures us of our resurrection in Christ and ultimately in time. If we were palaeographers, those who deal with ancient writings and inscriptions, we could read the beliefs and rituals concerning human death and none of them could give humanity hope.¹⁶ That is why we say the Resurrection of Christ is dynamic and

¹³ 'Two men . . . in dazzling apparel' (Luke 24:4).

¹⁴ The account in Matthew 28:1–8 is interesting, in that God's glory was shown to the Roman guards in the brilliant appearance and action of the angel of the Lord. The guards were not men of faith. The persons of faith present were two Marys. Their response to the same act of glory differed from that of the guards.

¹⁵ In the three predictions of the Cross by Christ to the disciples the word 'crucified' had not been used.

¹⁶ Morris West in his book *Eminence* (HarperCollins, Sydney, 1998) p. 80, has a palaeologist speaking of his world, 'It's one of the most arid fields of scholarship—one of the most lonely, too. Everything refers back to the past. The sign-posts all point down dead-end streets, to crumbling temples and forgotten gods. My own self has become a very dusty habitat.'

redolent with hope and assurance for believers. The rotting corpse no longer worries us in the way it did. Death is swallowed up for ever (Isa. 25:8; I Cor. 15:54–57). The thinking of the person of faith is transformed. It is all glory ahead.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESURRECTION FOR THOSE WHO BELIEVE IN IT

The Union of the Believing People with the Resurrected Christ Means Moral Power for Holy and Righteous Living

The body of Christian believers is not merely an aggregate of believing persons. It is a living body, the Body of Christ, the *ecclesia* of Christ just as Israel was the *ecclesia* (*qahal*) of Yahweh. This is brought out in the words of Hendrikus Berkhof:

In the way of obedience and self-surrender, Jesus' humanity is taken up into the sphere of God, the sphere of 'glory' (Heb. *kabod*; Gr. *doxa*), which thus far had been the exclusive sphere of God himself. Not that thereby he changes from human into divine, but as man he receives the most intimate union with God, as the capstone of his whole preceding way. The same is meant when it is said that Jesus is in 'heaven,' ascended into heaven, or was taken up into heaven. This is not so much a designation of place as one of form of existence. The same is intended with his 'sitting at the right hand of God,' thus in the place of the viceroy, of the rightful representative. And that implies still more: from now on God is essentially united with man and his divine existence is forever inseparable from man. And because God's right hand expresses his exercise of power, Jesus' glorification guarantees that God will rule in the spirit of and after the will of this man. God and Jesus in *one* place, on *one* throne—those bold expressions indicate a reality which had not entered the human heart: the covenant between God and man which had failed for so long, has now in *one* man eternally succeeded.¹⁷

Whilst this quotation links the Resurrection and Ascension as one, it also tells us that the human race in Christ is one with him. That is, because he is the risen one therefore his Church is a risen people.¹⁸ There is Christ and so there is the community belonging to him and finding its origin and its life in him. Berkhof harkens back to the eternal covenant with Man which was in being even before creation, but the wonderful fact is that Christ's Death, Burial and Resurrection are those of his followers. We do not mean that Christ's Death, Burial and Resurrection are imputed or accredited to believing Man but that Man was taken up into the Cross, Burial and Resurrection of Christ. He was made a participator in them.

At least three passages attest to the fact we have just set forth, Romans 6:1–10, Galatians 2:19–20, and Colossians 3:1–4. What we gather from them is what is stated in II Corinthians 5:14 'we are convinced that one has died for all; therefore all have died'. Christ gathered up all humanity in the Cross, and suffered not only *for* them but *as* them. Likewise he suffered the Death humanity should have suffered for sin *as* them. He also rose not only for them but *as* them. All of this fits with the doctrine of Christ as the New, Second—Final—Adam in the New Testament. Romans 5:12–21 shows that Christ is one who is 'much more' than Adam and all he did. Adam lost the glory God had given him, but Christ has regained it for Man. Paul in the three passages just quoted makes moral value from them. What has become foremost in our understanding of God's glory—and Man's glory, for that matter—is the moral nature of glory. If we ponder the matter then we see that in accordance with God's glory shown in Exodus 34:6–7 the work of Christ on the Cross was a work-out, practically

¹⁷ *Christian Faith* by Hendrikus Berkhof (Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1979) pp. 310–11.

¹⁸ The actual resurrection at the end time, spoken of by Christ in John 5:19–29, and referred to in other parts of the New Testament, is dependent upon Christ's Resurrection. We can speak of a 'spiritual' resurrection with him, so that the benefits of the Cross and Resurrection now come to believers. Their physical resurrection will come on the general resurrection day, but both the moral power of the Resurrection and the dynamic hope of resurrection to come work in the believer as a stimulus to hope and a resurrection-life experience here in time.

speaking, of that moral glory of God. Christ had to suffer the guilt of Man—Man's guilt before the holy law and the Holy God—and so the work of justification on which God's forgiveness is based was no mere forensic manipulation but the painful working out of sinful Man's condemnation before a Holy God so that humanity's acquittal from eternal judgment could be effected in the truly moral way. This moral work-out we must see and realise was in the vicarious suffering of Christ for guilty, sinful humanity.

Now, in Christ's Crucifixion and Resurrection, Man is wholly set free. He 'was delivered for our sins and raised for our justification'. Romans 6:1–14 shows that he who has died with Christ has been justified from sin (6:7) so that now the power of sin has been broken because its power lay in human guilt: guilt that has to do with the condemnation of the law.¹⁹ Thus the one who has died, been buried and raised with Christ now has moral glory, for sin shall no longer have (the right to have) dominion over him (6:12–14). He is no longer under (the condemnation of) law but he is under grace. The life he now lives he lives by the faith of the Son of God who loved him and gave himself for him (Gal. 2:20). This is part of what Paul calls 'the power of his resurrection' (Phil. 3:10).

Jesus' Resurrection from the Dead Brings His People under His Living Lordship

The power of God which raised Jesus from the dead was the same power that,

... made him sit at his [God's] right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come; and he has put all things under his feet and has made him the head over all things for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all (Eph. 1:20–23).

Christ is glorified at the right hand of God, and the power of his moral victory is over all things, and this is, among other things, 'for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all'. In this sense we can speak of moral power for his people in the task of proclaiming the gospel of grace and living as a community in grace. Because Christ is Lord nothing can prevail against his Church.

In practice it means that the members of Christ—his Church—can know peace amidst the conflicts that go on in the world, in history, and even in their own hearts. Christ has overcome Satan, the world and its evil powers. What is more, he is sharing his Resurrection authority and power with his people. The Church as the Bride or Wife of Christ is his helpmeet. She uses that power to assist him in carrying out the plan of God for all history. It is when we realise this freedom from bondage and oppression that the majesty of the Resurrection grips our minds and hearts. We are the beneficiaries of his Cross–Resurrection work. We are one in union with his person.

Christ's Resurrection Secures for His People the Fruits of the Cross

We keep noting that Romans 4:25 links the work of the Cross and the Resurrection together as though the two were the one work for salvation, He 'was delivered for our sins, and raised for our justification'. Isaiah 53:11 has, 'he shall see the fruit of the travail of his soul and be satisfied'.²⁰ The fruit of the Cross is the forgiveness, justification, sanctification, perfection and glorification of God's elect, won by it—by Him—as also the fulfilment of the covenant, and the victory over all evil powers so that they were defeated for ever. These are monumental

¹⁹ That the power of sin lies in guilt and that guilt is linked with the law is shown in Romans 6:16 and I Corinthians 15:56. Christ, by bearing the sting of death—sin—withdrew that sting, and thus, forever, the guilt of Man. Justified Man is thus free from the power of sin (cf. John 8:31–36).

²⁰ This is one of those Scriptures which can be clearly seen to relate to Christ's Resurrection, but it must not be seen or used as a 'proof text'. The Suffering Servant of Isaiah 52:14 – 53:12 must triumph in the end, and so it is so.

matters, worthy of our continuous contemplation and understanding, since they influence our lives so deeply. Again we note this is wholly the moral glory achieved by Christ's work of the atonement. We may not see radiance, light and Shekinah glory but we are living in it.

The Resurrection of Christ Makes Christ Intercessor for God's People

In Romans 8:33–34 Paul shows that without the Resurrection God's people would have no intercessor for them. They would be defeated by Satan:

Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies; who is to condemn? Is it Christ Jesus, who died, yes, who was raised from the dead, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us?

Hebrews 4:14–16 and 7:23–25 link with this idea in that it is the victorious Christ, raised to God's right hand, who is our Intercessor. Whilst it is by him as our Intercessor that we come to God (cf. Isa. 53:12; Heb. 2:14–18) it is also by him that we are continually preserved from the Evil One and his powers every moment of our lives. He guards us in all our moments, and his presence at the right hand of the Father is the guarantee that through him we are more than conquerors.

THE PROCLAMATION OF THE RESURRECTION

All theologians, whether they believe in a physical Resurrection of Christ or not, agree that the *euaggelion* or *kerugma*—the good news or the proclamation—always included the Resurrection of Messiah. In fact it was the first matter preached apostolically. This can be seen reading the sermons in Acts.²¹ It was an astounding claim, and by nature of the case, difficult for the enemies of the gospel to refute. We have seen that the early preachers did not seek to prove that Christ had risen from the dead. They saw their task was to witness to it as fact. The Epistles have rich teaching regarding the work of the Cross and the work of the Resurrection and set them forth as being the one work by which human beings can be saved; but it is the Resurrection which not only shows that the Cross is essential for saving Man, but also that the gospel when it proclaims that 'Jesus is Lord' because of the Resurrection, is the means of salvation through that Lordship. Romans 10:9 makes this clear, 'because, if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved'. How difficult a thing in the natural to believe that God had raised Jesus from the dead! It was when Peter spoke on the Resurrection and then concluded, 'Let all the house of Israel therefore know assuredly that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified' (Acts 2:36), that the listeners were cut to the heart and cried out to be shown how to receive salvation.

In Acts 4 the Church, being gathered together to pray for the apostles when they had come from the Sanhedrin, knew that the thing the apostles must do was 'to speak the word with all boldness'. Having prayed this the whole Church was filled with the Holy Spirit, one result of which was that 'the apostles gave their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all' (Acts 4:23–33).

When it has been proclaimed down to innumerable tribes, nations and cultures through two millenniums that this man, Jesus, went through the pangs of death and rose again, then it is seen that he has outshone the greatest religious geniuses in human history for he alone has

²¹ In looking at the sermons in Acts and other statements in it we see the emphasis on the Resurrection: 2:24; 3:15; 4:2, 10, 33; 5:30; 10:40; 13:30, 37; 17:18, 32. Emphasis on the resurrection at the last day is seen in 17:32; 23:6; 24:15, 21. We note that there are not many references to the Cross, but when 'the whole counsel of God' is expounded in the Epistles, the importance of the Cross comes to the fore, and that without detriment to the emphasis on Christ's Resurrection.

borne the sins of the human race and he alone has risen triumphant. ‘I died’, he said, testifying to his experience of death, ‘and I am alive again’. When the reality of this mystery breaks through to men and women by the power of the Holy Spirit then those who comprehend want to belong to this one, this Last Adam. They want to be part of the new, living people of God. They want to rise to new life, now, and then join the countless multitude who will rise again at the last day, cleansed by the Cross and given life by his Resurrection, realising the inheritance of eternity, wearing the body of glory as a kingdom of priests unto their God.

SUMMARY OF THE GLORY OF CHRIST’S RESURRECTION AND ITS EFFECTS

We have seen that the fact of this one Man risen from the dead is the basis for all who believe in Christ. It is to have implanted in themselves the whole matter of hope. Hope is based upon the work of the Cross and its fruits. It is also based on the Resurrection of Christ, his Ascension and Reigning in glory. In fact, the apostolic believer could see nothing but glory ahead of him. We suppose he knew the doctrine of ‘the new man’, that is, Christ. The New Man is the true, the second, the last Adam.

If we think that the repentant, believing sinner is given back his being as it was in Adam prior to the Fall, then certainly we would seem to have something here. However, he is not just fallen Man reprimed. He is the fallen Man redeemed and taken into Christ. He is *in* the New Adam. As unfallen Adam he had all the elements of a true human being, but Paul says this Adam was but ‘a living being’; he was ‘of the earth, earthy’. He was not limited as Man and all that God had for him as Man, but his origin limited what he could ever achieve since he was ever ‘of the earth, earthy’. That was at best his future. The last Adam is ‘the man from heaven’. His origins are not limited to earth. He is ‘a life-giving spirit’, even as he takes on the earthy entail of humanity. He is the Adam beyond Adam whether that Adam be fallen or not. So there is a glorious prospect for every man of Adam born but in Christ reborn to a living hope—a hope beyond any hope he had ever had—*because Christ rose from the dead!* Christ is himself the Resurrection and the life, and none other is this. He is the fountain of living water, which, if anyone drink of it he shall live. Every one of Christ reborn shall rise from the dead. Christ was the first fruits, ‘the first-born from the dead’. It is into this glorious humanity that Man in Christ now enters. Christ’s future is his future! Thus we say that true hope is born in all its elements from Christ’s Resurrection (I Pet. 1:3). He is the one who has broken through the death barrier, as our Adam, our Prophet–Priest–King Adam, and so all the glories set forth to be attained by the first Adam are now set out for us. The various kinds of hope, or, shall we say, the various aspects of hope which are named below, are fruit of him who is the ‘first fruits’ of the Resurrection.

The following quotes, then, link all the New Testament tells us concerning hope. If we examine these objects of hope in their several contexts we will find they all link with glory, are to do with the eschatological glory planned for God’s elect. I Peter 1:3–4 shows that the living hope we have comes through the Resurrection of Christ, ‘Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By his great mercy we have been born anew to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and to an inheritance which is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you.’ Likewise Paul can say, ‘awaiting our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ’ (Titus 2:13).

The references to the objects of hope are:

‘the hope of glory’; ‘the hope [of] the resurrection’; ‘our hope of sharing the glory of God’; ‘the hope of righteousness [justification]’; ‘the hope of salvation’; ‘Christ Jesus our hope’; ‘our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ’; ‘the hope to which he has called you’; along with ‘his glorious inheritance in the saints’; ‘the hope of the gospel’; ‘the hope of eternal life’. It is because God is ‘the God of hope’ and our hope is ‘laid up . . . in heaven’ that hope ‘hopes all things’, and

even ‘in hope believes against hope’. As Paul says, ‘If for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all men most to be pitied’. It is hope that is for here and eternity—how could it be otherwise and be hope?—for Christ himself is our hope, and within us (among us) he is the hope of glory. That is why we are enjoined to ‘seize the hope set before us’ and to ‘hold fast the confession of our hope’.²²

It is clear that without the Resurrection of Christ the matter of hope has no basis at all.

CONCLUSION TO ‘COMPREHENDING THE RESURRECTION’

We come back to the fact that all humanity has a fear of death. Death is not actually part of our life unless, of course, we are thinking in terms of moral/spiritual death. Everything in our lives moves towards death. The Apostle John wrote, ‘There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and he who fears is not perfected in love.’ We saw in Hebrews 2:14–15 that men and women are in fear of death all their lives, and hence come under the bondage of the Accuser, Satan. Fear of death is really fear of judgment, and John’s perfect love is that love which worked on the Cross and through the Resurrection to take away guilt and so fear of punishment. Thus people believe and come into the freedom of love which is no fear of death. It may be natural to have trepidation about growing old, and to have a certain dread of the act of dying, and even here we have the assurance that death has no real sting, the grave no real victory. Faith helps us to face what is ahead knowing that although we die as regards the body, yet we will never meet death itself. We shall certainly meet life, the life into which we move. When the paralysing fear of death is overcome by Christ’s perfect love, then faith knows the power of present, resurrection living (Phil. 3:10). As we have already seen, Christ, on the Cross, bore the sting of death—sin. The power of sin was (is) by the law, its guilt and its threat to human peace.²³ The sting has gone, and the sweetness of peace through grace has come to us from our Covenant God and His Covenant Head, His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

We have been raised with Christ in regard to our former moral/spiritual death. This is the proof to us that we shall be raised from bodily death and be equipped with a body of glory. The first Resurrection which was Christ’s includes all the elect in that Resurrection. It has been well said that what Christ began in that Resurrection he will complete in the ultimate resurrection. It is in this assurance by faith that we now live, and for us also ‘faith is the assurance of things hoped for’.

²² Because we wished this particular paragraph not to be interrupted by references so that straight reading of it might prove more effective, we have stated the references in this footnote. They can be checked against the text. They are Colossians 1:27; Acts 23:6; 24:15; cf. 28:20; Romans 5:2; Galatians 5:5; I Thessalonians 5:8; I Timothy 1:1; Titus 2:13; Romans 8:30; Ephesians 1:18; 4:4; I Thessalonians 2:12; II Peter 1:3–5; Colossians 1:23; Titus 1:2; 3:7, cf. I Peter 5:10; Romans 15:13; Colossians 1:5; I Corinthians 13:7; Romans 4:18; I Corinthians 15:19; Colossians 1:27; Hebrews 6:18; 10:23. The quotation and footnote are taken from the August 1998 Study of the NCTM Monday Pastors’ Group, entitled, ‘Glory Proclaimed and Pastoral’.

²³ We need to see continually that we cannot have his Cross apart from the Resurrection, nor his Resurrection apart from the Cross.

The Person & Work of Christ: The Incarnation—V

THE WORK OF THE ASCENSION AND SESSION

INTRODUCTION: THE GLORY OF THE CROSS, RESURRECTION, ASCENSION AND REIGNING

John tells us, 'And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory as of the only Son from the Father' (John 1:14). The glory of the Son is not in one event—the Incarnation—but relates to all events; his Incarnation, his Ministry, the Cross, Death, Resurrection, Ascension and his Session—Reigning—at the right hand of God. If we think of the glory as we have been thinking in terms of moral being and moral action, then we see all these events constitute the action of the glory by which the Son manifests the glory of God and himself. We have been emphatic in saying the work of the Cross is the special manifestation of glory, and it is certain that this is the case, but the Cross must be seen in its place in the total events. None is authentic without the others.

In our study on the Resurrection we saw it is difficult to differentiate it from the Ascension and heavenly Session. John 7:37–39 speaks of the Holy Spirit to be given when Christ was glorified, and not before then. His glorification might be deduced to have happened prior to the Ascension from the passage of John 20:22–23 where Jesus breathed on them and said, 'Receive the Holy Spirit'. It seems certain, also, that in some sense they received the Spirit then. Even so, the giving of the Spirit as spoken of in John 14:15–17, 26, 15:26, and 16:7–15 does seem to be of larger nature than this. Undoubtedly we have Pentecost conditioning our primary thinking as regards glorification, and John was present in this event and so carried its effects into his apostolic ministry. Our main point here is that Resurrection, Ascension and Reigning are certainly all involved in the glorifying of the Son by the Father.¹

THE EVENT OF THE ASCENSION

The heaven or the heavens are a great and profound subject in the Old Testament—to say nothing of the New Testament, and in particular the Book of the Revelation where important materials are available for consideration. Psalm 19:1 says, 'The heavens are telling the glory of God; and the firmament proclaims his handiwork', and this is speaking of the created, visible heavens. Psalm 8:3–4 shows the astonishment the Psalmist feels when he thinks of the heavens, and then of mere, mortal Man, 'When I look at thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars which thou hast established; what is man that thou art mindful of him, and the son of man that thou dost care for him?' The Psalms themselves are filled with expressions of wonder regarding the heavens, God as the One enthroned, and the vast number of celestial inhabitants and the tasks they carry out. Heaven is a wonderful place, humbling to the heart of Man but encouraging him, also, that its God—Yahweh—is his Covenant God.

Undoubtedly there is a hierarchy of the 'glorious ones'; that is, the archangels, the living celestial creatures such as seraphim and cherubim, and then the other orders of angels. All attend worshipfully upon God and serve Him. He, for His part, has a 'heavenly council'.

¹ Much of this material is taken from my book *All Cry, 'Glory!': The Story of Glory*, to be published by NCPI later in 1999.

Great is the worship the celestial inhabitants continually render to Yahweh. Even so, pride has penetrated to one or more² of these magnificent creatures, and Isaiah 14:13–15 speaks of such a one, that is, ‘Day Star, son of Dawn’, who has a consuming passion to make himself ‘like the Most High’ and to make his throne higher than His:

You said in your heart,
‘I will ascend to heaven;
above the stars of God
I will set my throne on high;
I will sit on the mount of assembly
in the far north;
I will ascend above the heights of the clouds,
I will make myself like the Most High.’³

What we see is that heaven is a realm beyond the physical realm of visible creation, but by no means unconnected with it. In Genesis chapters 1 and 2, Psalm 8, and other Old Testament passages, we gather that they constitute the one, whole creation of God. This is borne out by Ephesians 4:7–10:

But grace was given to each of us according to the measure of Christ’s gift. Therefore it is said, ‘When he ascended on high he led a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men.’ (In saying, ‘He ascended,’ what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is he who also ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things.)

For a human person to ascend to heaven is not only a rare matter but also an important one. Was this the case with Enoch, and with Elijah? Is heaven the destiny of God’s faithful human creatures? It is a matter of wonder that the Messiah descended to the lowest depths and then reached the highest height.

So we begin to see the vast wonder of the Ascension. It is not merely that Christ goes ‘up’, as Elijah appears to have done, for this one—Christ—is no mere prophet. That he should be ‘taken up in glory’, in fact the ‘cloud of glory’—as Peter wrote in his first Letter, ‘. . . God who raised him up and gave him glory’—is a matter of greatness. Thus Matthew 19:28, ‘the Son of man shall sit on his glorious throne’. Add to this the magnificent depictions of him in the Book of the Revelation, sharing the glory of the Father, and we begin to have the sense of his great power and position.

Our spirits, then, must be humbled and at the same time enlarged in order to have the right mind and disposition to learn of his Ascension and Session at the right hand of God. This is the man who has been seated at the very right hand of the Eternal God, his Holy Father. Thus he can tell his disciples before he ascends, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me’. With awe we hear this pronouncement and with a sense of privilege take up its outcome, ‘Go . . . and make disciples of all nations’. This is the One of all humans—the Son of God Himself, who:

. . . raised him [Christ] from the dead and made him sit at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come; and he has put all things under his feet and has made him the head over all things for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all (Eph. 1:20–23).

² Revelation 12:4 speaks of the tail of the red dragon (Satan) sweeping down a third of the stars of heaven, that is, a third of the angels. Two Peter 2:4 and Jude 6 also speak of rebellious angels who are kept in chains against the day of their judgment.

³ This being and ambition are accorded to the king of Babylon, but the language is of a higher order of rebellion although the ambition is identical. Likewise Ezekiel 28 speaks in similar language of the king of Tyre and seems to refer to the serpent we find in Eden in Genesis 3.

The Ascension in the Synoptic Gospels

The fact of Christ's Ascension into heaven has long been an article of the Christian faith. It is interesting, then, to see that of the Synoptic Gospels and the Acts, it is Luke only who describes the Ascension. In Luke 24:50–51 we read, 'Then he led them out as far as Bethany, and lifting up his hands he blessed them. While he blessed them, *he parted from them, and was carried up into heaven.*' This is the total description, sufficient though it is. In Acts 1:8–11 (Luke's words) we read Christ's words:

'But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth.' And when he had said this, as they were looking on, *he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight.* And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes, and said, 'Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.'

The end of Matthew's Gospel seems to presuppose Christ's Ascension. Otherwise the ending would not make great sense as it stands. Of course Matthew's Gospel has 16:27 which speaks of his coming again and so presupposes his going, 'For the Son of man is to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay every man for what he has done'. Matthew 24:30 repeats the same idea:

... then will appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

To come with glory speaks of his previous state of reigning. Matthew 26:64 speaks likewise, 'Jesus said to him, "You have said so. But I tell you, hereafter you will see the Son of man seated at the right hand of Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven."' 'To speak of a return presupposes a going, that is, the Ascension. The statement in Matthew 28:18, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me', must also presuppose his Ascension.

In Mark's Gospel which ends at 16:8, there are the shorter and longer added endings which were presumably not written by Mark himself, the first of which says in verse 19, 'So then the Lord Jesus, after he had spoken to them, was taken up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God'. Those are the direct statements given in the Gospels and the Acts. Both Matthew and Mark have Jesus' apocalyptic sayings about the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven (Mark 13:26; 14:62; Matt. 24:30; 26:64). To speak of a return presupposes a going.

The Ascension in John's Gospel

John's Gospel has three sayings which relate to the Ascension: (i) 'No one has ascended into heaven, but he who descended from heaven, the Son of man' (3:13); (ii) Jesus' question to his disciples, 'what if you were to see the Son of man ascending where he was before?' (6:62); and (iii) 'Jesus said to her, "Do not hold me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to my brethren and say to them, I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God"' (20:17). In John's Gospel also there are references to his going away to the Father and coming to them again. John 14:2–3 is very clear. It also speaks of the work between the Ascension and the Parousia. In 14:12 and 28 he speaks plainly, 'I go to the Father'. In 7:33, and 8:14, 21 he speaks to outsiders in regard to his going. In 3:33, 14:4, and 16:5, 10, 17 his references to the Ascension are spoken to the disciples. In John's Gospel is the theme of Christ's glorification. Many references pertain to the glorification of Jesus when on earth (7:39; 12:16, 23; 13:31, 32; 17:5), that is, without his being ascended. Jesus' prayer in chapter 17 is that he may be back again with the Father, so that there can be no final glorification apart from the Ascension.

The Ascension in the Acts

As we have seen, Acts 1:9 (cf. Luke 24:50–53) describes the Ascension, ‘And when he had said this, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight’, a happening which the two men in white robes describe as Jesus being ‘taken up into heaven’. Acts 2:24–36 is part of Peter’s Pentecost sermon in which he describes the Crucifixion, Resurrection and Ascension of Christ to the right hand of God in accordance with Psalms 16 and 110. This news acts dynamically upon the hearers. The maligned criminal of Calvary is at the right hand of God! In Acts 3:19–21 Peter speaks of God’s intention to ‘send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus, whom heaven must receive until the time for establishing all that God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old’. In Acts 5:30–31 Peter describes the Ascension, ‘The God of our fathers raised Jesus whom you killed by hanging him on a tree. God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Saviour, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins.’ Stephen testifies to the fact of the Ascension in Acts 7:55–56, ‘But he, full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God; and he said, “Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing at the right hand of God”’. Paul in all his descriptions of meeting Christ on the road to Damascus testifies to the Ascension of this One. The Lordship of Christ is always claimed on the fact of Jesus’ Resurrection, but often Resurrection and Ascension are understood as the one. There is no suggestion that Christ, being raised, is not in heaven in ruling triumph.

The Ascension in the Epistles

Paul is the greatest exponent of the Ascension, and undoubtedly this is linked with his experience of the risen and ascended Christ. His hymn of I Timothy 3:16 is powerful and shows the sequence of Christ’s life and ministry:

Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of our religion: He was manifested in the flesh, vindicated in the Spirit, seen by angels, preached among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory.

The statement ‘taken up in glory’ can possibly mean ‘taken up *into* glory’, but probably both meanings are present. Ephesians 2:5–6 show that he is seated in the heavenlies, and that we, now, have a part in his ministry:

... even when we were dead through our trespasses, [he] made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with him, and made us sit with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

Romans 8:34 is clear:

... who is to condemn? Is it Christ Jesus, who died, yes, who was raised from the dead, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us?

Here together the Resurrection, Ascension and Session are described. In Ephesians 1:20–21 he speaks of these three elements:

... which he accomplished in Christ when he raised him from the dead and made him sit at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come.

Ephesians 4:9–10 speak of the Ascension and its purpose:

(In saying, ‘He ascended,’ what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is he who also ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things.)

Colossians 3:1 presupposes the Ascension and speaks of the Session, ‘If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God’.

First Peter 3:22, ‘Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers subject to him’, speaks of both Ascension and Session. The writer of Hebrews needs to be closely read and understood. Hebrews 4:14, ‘Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession’, can be linked with a number of similar statements, for example 7:25 ‘he always lives to make intercession for [us]’.

The Ascension in the Book of the Revelation

Most of this prophecy of John is given over to visions, apocalyptic pictures which keep showing Christ in his glory, as in heaven, and much of it has to do with his Session. The material is so plentiful as to be almost embarrassing. It will be appropriate to deal with it in the Section below concerned with the work of Christ in his Session which is really the goal of his Ascension.

We see from these New Testament Scriptures that the Ascension and the Session figure largely in them. In fact the New Testament cannot be intelligibly understood apart from these rich materials.

THE SIGNIFICANCE AND FRUITS OF THE ASCENSION AND SESSION

The Son Has Returned to the Father

This heading sounds simple enough, but it is pointing to the Son having completed the work the Father has given him to do and that it was successful. Jesus, in John’s Gospel, makes much of his returning to the Father: ‘Jesus knew that it was his hour to depart out of this world to the Father’; ‘knowing that he was going to God’; ‘In my Father’s house . . . I go to prepare a place for you’; ‘I am leaving the world and going to the Father’; ‘but now I am going to him who sent me; yet none of you asks me, “Where are you going?”’. In John 16:7–11 Jesus gives his reasons for going, and one of them is to convince the world of sin and righteousness and judgment—‘concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see me no more’. His going affirms his attestation by the Father, and gives him the place as Judge.

We might think his going was natural and what ought to be and therefore not especially significant, but it is a matter of immense importance, not only in the relationship of the Father and the Son, but also of Them, and Their Kingdom together (Eph. 5:5; Rev. 11:15). In John 17:24 Jesus desires a rich and profound experience for his disciples:

Father, I desire that they also, whom thou hast given me, may be with me where I am, to behold my glory which thou hast given me in thy love for me before the foundation of the world.

The going—shown to us in the form of the Ascension—is the seal of his Sonship, on the past work of his incarnation and his present and future work as the crowned King of God’s Kingdom, the Lord of history and Intercessor of his people.

The Ascension and the Session Are the One Work

Christ’s Ascension was with a view to his reigning. The idea of Messiah’s reigning was an ancient one in Israel, though doubtless his reigning in Sion was, at the first, geographical. The wider concept of this reigning and its embracing all nations was a development in Israel’s thinking. That is why in the Old Testament there are numerous indications of it, namely those

connected with Christ being seated at the right hand of God, and these in their turn are linked with Psalms 2, 89 and 110. In Psalm 2 God says, ‘I have set my king on Zion my holy hill’, and Zion comes to mean God’s sanctuary in heaven. In Psalm 110:1 we read, ‘The LORD says to my lord: “Sit at my right hand, till I make your enemies your footstool”’, and the one at the right hand is ‘a priest for ever, after the order of Melchizedek’, and not only Priest but Prophet and King. Psalm 89 is a brilliant exposition of God’s appointed King.

The term ‘right hand’ is used a number of times in the New Testament and 18 of these refer to Christ’s enthronement at God’s right hand, including the prophecies of his return where he is ‘seated at the right hand of Power’, ‘Power’ being a term for God. Peter, Paul and the writer of Hebrews all use the term to signify Christ’s enthronement and his Session—his reigning—at the right hand of the Father.

Acts 1:21–22 describes Jesus’ ministry as being ‘during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us’. That ministry was in two parts as we saw in a previous Study, namely (i) up to the point of his death, and (ii) that which followed his resurrection, to his ascension. All of this Luke describes in Acts 1:1–2, ‘all that Jesus *began* both to *do* and *teach* until the day when he was taken up’. It is clear then that Jesus’ ministry was from the baptism of John until the Ascension and that this ministry was to continue *after* his Ascension, that is, to continue to *do* and to *teach*. This, of course, would be his ministry from the throne. This is powerfully described in I Corinthians 15:24–28, meaning that Christ who had won his victory on the Cross would now work it out in history until the Kingdom would be final in its triumph.

The Elements of Christ’s Session Work

Christ as the King of the Kingdom

The word ‘Session’ means being seated, as when a court or a business meeting is ‘in session’. In Christ’s case, to be seated at the right hand of God was to be next in order to the Father, and to reign with Him, hence the Kingdom is called ‘the kingdom of our Lord and his Christ’ and ‘the kingdom of Christ and God’. We know that Christ was baptised by John in relation to the Kingdom, and that it was then when the Father pronounced Jesus to be His Son, and in effect that was his coronation in accordance with Psalm 2:6, ‘I have set my king on Zion, my holy hill’. Then the pronouncement, ‘You are my son, today I have begotten you’, involved in this is his being made king over all the nations.⁴

In Psalm 110:1 we have the statement, ‘The LORD says to my lord: “Sit at my right hand, till I make your enemies your footstool”’. In the New Testament we find it applied to Christ in Hebrews 1:13 and 10:12–13. It appears that the Father is the prime mover in this event, yet I Corinthians 15:24–28 widens the scope of both the action and the movers in the action:

Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death. ‘For God has put all things in subjection under his feet.’ But when it says, ‘All things are put in subjection under him,’ it is plain that he is excepted who put all things under him. When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to him who put all things under him, that God may be everything to every one.

It can be seen here that Christ’s Session is the time to defeat in finality all the powers of darkness—the enemies of God. In one sense these few verses in I Corinthians are a precis of the whole of the Book of the Revelation. From chapter 5 to the end, Christ is seen as having the seven-sealed book, the outworking of which is God’s history for the Kingdom of God

⁴ We might say that Christ’s coronation, secured at his Baptism, can be shown to be spaced out in stages, namely at his baptism, at his Transfiguration, at his work of the Cross, at his Resurrection and at his Ascension. It is a fact that Psalm 2 is used in reference to all these events.

and the kingdom of evil. Judgments are wrought on (i) the people and nations which oppose God, reject His covenant and break His law, and (ii) the enemies of God such as Satan (the red dragon), the first and second beasts (the latter being the false prophet), Babylon, and the kings in concert with the beast, those who oppose Christ and his church. These are defeated, thrown into the lake of fire, and all who have opposed God are judged and meet the same end. Christ's ministry leads to the glories of the *telos*.

Christ's Engifting from the Throne

Acts 2:33 endorses John 7:39 where the gift of the Holy Spirit was promised when Christ would be fully glorified, 'Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this which you see and hear'. We can say, then, that both the gift of the Holy Spirit and the gift of repentance come from Christ's throne. This also relates to the gift of forgiveness of sins to Israel, for Acts 5:31 says, 'God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins'. Again, in Acts 11:18 we read, 'When they heard this they were silenced. And they glorified God, saying, "Then to the Gentiles also God has granted [the gift of] repentance unto life" '.

From this we take it that the gift of the Holy Spirit continually comes to all flesh from Christ's Session. Likewise the gifts of repentance, faith and forgiveness continually proceed from Christ. They have no other source. For this reason we should give considerable consideration to the Ascension and the Session. It is no wonder it is called 'the throne of grace for help in time of need'.

Christ's Session Enthronement of His People

In our last Study we saw what Paul calls 'the power of his resurrection' (Phil. 3:10), that is, Christ being risen is Lord and rules over all creation and gives eternal life to his elect so that those living on earth will work in that power. We saw the amazing matter of our present enthronement with Christ in Ephesians 2:4-7:

But God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with him, and made us sit with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

That is, Christ's Ascension and Enthronement mean, in some sense, our present resurrection and enthronement with him—however we may explain it. One way is to say we are 'in Christ' —that powerful principle of present union with him—and so we share in his reigning. Colossians 3:1-4 considered as a spatial dimension seems to mean Christ is above and we are below, and whilst that is true in one sense, yet the passage encourages us to believe it fairly parallels the Ephesian passage quoted above, especially as our lives are hid with Christ in God:

If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory (Col. 3:1-4).

The verses which follow these speak of the immense power we draw from this 'throne life'. To be seated with him is to have his moral power working in every aspect of our lives. The many intimations in the New Testament—that we abide in Christ, that he abides in us, that our lives flow from him—encourage us to see that at this very present time we are partaking of Christ's Session. By this we 'reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ' (Rom. 5:17), and in our moral and spiritual living he is our guiding Lord and driving power. We are sharing in his 'Session history', if we may coin that term.

Christ's Heavenly Intercession

This is a subject of immense dimensions and importance, and we should add an Appendix, 'Christ's Intercession', to fill out what we cannot include here.⁵ Such an Appendix would show us that Christ was really 'a high priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek' and from his baptism—if not before—began his work of intercession. This was not an easy work. Intercession has a substantial history in the Old Testament, where it can also mean 'intervention'—this based on Isaiah chapter 59. Quotes from two scholars on Isaiah 53:12—'Therefore I will divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he poured out his soul to death, and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors'—will help us to understand something of its nature:

He acted as mediator and *made intercession* . . . The base meaning is 'to cause to reach' and hence 'cause someone's plea to reach someone's ears' (to intercede) or to 'introduce someone into someone's presence' (to mediate). The Servant is thus a go-between, interposing between two parties, not as a barrier but as a bridge. In verse 6, the Lord put his Servant in between, using him as a means of disposing of that (our iniquity) which alienated him from us. Here the Servant comes voluntarily to stand with us so that when he had borne our sin he might bring us to God.⁶

The hip'il of the verb p ga', 'to light upon someone', means 'to cause to light upon', as in 53.6 . . . Used absolutely it means 'to intervene', as in Isa. 59:16. This elucidates the meaning here, 'he interceded for the transgressors'. This does not mean, as some editors imagine, that he made prayers of intercession for them, but that with his life, his suffering and his death, he took their place and underwent their punishment in their stead.⁷

Christ's intercession was a taking up of the sins of the sinner—of the sinful world—and bearing the excruciating weight of them to their full judgment and exhaustion. This was completed in Gethsemane and on the Cross. The intercession was voluntary and therefore valid and so, effective. This is the basis now for his heavenly Session–Intercession. Hebrews 4:14–16 encourages us to seek intercession at Christ's throne of grace:

Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we have not a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

Hebrews 7:23–25 is also encouraging us to trust in his High Priesthood which is his ministry of Session:

The former priests were many in number, because they were prevented by death from continuing in office; but he holds his priesthood permanently, because he continues for ever. Consequently he is able for all time to save those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.

Undoubtedly part of his intercession is to do with those who have not yet come to God by him, but much of his intercession has to do with those who already are his people, his flock, his church. This is shown by Romans 8:33–34:

Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies; who is to condemn? Is it Christ Jesus, who died, yes, who was raised from the dead, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us?

We see here that those for whom he intercedes are believers, no longer under condemnation.

⁵ In a book in the making, titled *Comprehending Prayer*, to be published later by NCPI, there is a chapter headed 'Christ's Intercession'.

⁶ Alec Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, IVP, Leicester, 1993, p. 443.

⁷ Claus Westermann, *Isaiah 40–66*, SCM Press, London, 1969, p. 269.

This opens a wide subject. That such intercession is vitally necessary continually is seen in Romans 8:26–27 where the Holy Spirit also intercedes for the believers when they do not know ‘how to pray as [they] ought’. There is a sort of double intercession, and if we add the believer in, then there is really a triple intercession. Intercession then must cover all elements of the life of the believer and the believing community. How encouraging! How fortifying!

Summing up the matter of intercession we may say that Christ’s Session is not only to do with every matter of the Kingdom but also with every matter of the Church and each believer here and now. The whole of history proceeds from this intercession.

CONCLUSION: THE ACTION OF THE SESSION IS ONE WITH THE ESCHATON

It is with Christ’s Ascension that the ‘last days’ appear. In Joel 2:28ff. God pronounces that ‘it shall come to pass afterward’ which Peter translates as ‘In the last days’ in Acts 2:17ff. This is also the idea in Jeremiah 31:31–34 regarding the New Covenant sealed by Christ’s death and resurrection. The writer of Hebrews translates it ‘The days will come’, and ‘after those days’ (8:8; 10:16). Christ’s work was finished on the earth, and with this as its foundation—‘all that Jesus began to do’—Jesus went on doing what we have called the work of the Session, and continues so to do.

This is one of the reasons why some writers say, in essence, ‘There is no such thing as eschatology. Christ himself is the eschaton’, and this is true. What we call ‘eschatological things’ are all the works done by Christ. This causes us to take stock of all Jesus’ ministry and see that as the Son his work has ever been from creation. This will help us to shake off the strange idea that Christ is absent from the earth in this present period and that somehow eschatological happenings just ‘happen’, or are the result of certain powerful forces—forces good and forces evil—working. This is not the case. It is Christ working in concert with the Father and the Spirit. Luke’s statement, ‘all that Jesus began to do and teach’, with its inference of ‘all he was going to do and to teach’, really clarifies Christ’s work for us.

He told the disciples in Matthew 28:18–20 that as they obeyed his commission for world-wide proclamation of the gospel, then he would be with them ‘always, even to the consummation of the age’. The interesting passage of John 16:16–24 speaks of him going, coming—as he did after his Resurrection—and then going to the Father, but there is no sense in which he is deserting them. Another (similar) Counsellor will come and he will stand by them.

In fact we know that the whole of Christ—so to speak—is wholly present in the whole of the Holy Spirit. We are not really called upon to discuss the matter of ubiquity. Christ as the Son of God has ever been present to the whole of creation as God is ever present to it. Our talk of Throne, Kingdom, Intercession, Reigning and such themes are not *literal* elements, howbeit they certainly are *actual* elements.

If we speak of this last age in terms of Christ’s Person being in action, wholly involved in the creation and particularly involved in his people, then we will not see ourselves as living in a world in which he is not present. It is *the way* in which he is present which we need to accept, though we know it not, and so we are not thinking of *the way* as a *how*, but as a *fact*. When we talk of Christ’s person being in action, we mean that in his several offices and ministries as Messiah, Son of God, Son of Man, Lord, Saviour, Head of the Church, the Bridegroom, the Second Adam, the Prophet, Priest and King of all humanity, Christ is working in all those capacities and fulfilling the needs and support of creation. Constant remembering of these offices and ministries will help us to understand each of what we have called ‘the elements of the Session’.

As for the climactic matters which are the outcome of the Session, we leave those to our next Study, the one of his Parousia or ‘appearing’, for that is the point where history climaxes and what protology foreshadowed at the beginning will be fulfilled by Christ in concert with the Father and the Spirit at the end of the age.

EPILOGUE

Heavenly Father, Thou art most Heavenly and most Fatherly and hast for ever generated Thy Son as the living, palpable Image of Thyself. So much so that when I behold Him I behold Thee, and when I behold Thee I behold Him. I thank Thee for this living way of having affinity with Thee because of thy everlasting Love Covenant in which, and for which Thou didst create all human flesh. I thank Thee because Thou didst make Him to be Heavenly and humanly Son, Lord, King, High Priest, Prophet and the peerless Adam of all our Human race, and Elder Brother to our Family.

Beloved Son of the Father, I thank Thee that Thou didst ever flow from the Love of the Father, and from Thy heart hast ever loved the world Thou didst help to create and to sustain and hold together against the vile fall of our Father Adam and the disintegrating powers the Serpent let loose in Holy, Joyous Eden. I thank Thee that Thou didst almost die of terrible and horrible pain in Gethsemane's quiet garden, but pressed on to the Cross to fully die for our redemption and liberation into Your most beautiful Life. I see Thee in all Thy beauty, Thy majesty and Thy glory, reigning for us, having been loosed from the sharp pains of Death.

Blessed and beloved Holy Spirit, I thank Thee for being the very Life by which the Father and the Son created the world, and for bringing light and form and beautiful order into being. I thank Thee that Thou didst bring Love to the human race from its first breath and impulse of Your Life and for persisting patiently with Us so that Thou wouldst please the Father, the Son and Us with the transformation of Us into the holy image of the entire Triune Godhead.

Ever keep me, I pray oh Thou Triune One, and ever keep my Brothers and my Sisters in true, holy adoration, so that the great and powerful Truth of Thy Being may not become words and ideas to me and to them, however wonderful they may appear to be. Oh Father, may Thy Spirit ever reveal Thee to me, reveal Thy Son to me, and reveal Himself to me in the manner Thou thinkest fit and orderest rightly for me and all Thy children.

All this I ask for myself and all our Family which Thou hast created for Thy own Love and Glory, and I ask it through my Great Saviour and Lord. Amen.

The Person & Work of Christ: The Incarnation—VI

THE WORK OF THE PAROUSIA—THE APPEARING OF CHRIST—AND THE HOPE OF IT

INTRODUCTION

We have sought to understand each work of Christ, but then none can be understood except in the light of all his works. In this Study we intend to cover the biblical descriptions of the Parousia, and then the fact and content of the Telos—the completion of all things. To open up all elements of the Telos requires a further Study and this will be the next one in the order of this Christology. What we hope to do in this present Study is to talk about our contemplating, comprehension and response to not only the Parousia and the Telos, but also to all the history which will have led up to them. Whilst this may seem to be a somewhat subjective approach to our material, yet, in fact, it is what alerts us to the marvel and majesty of God and the high dignity He accords to all His creation.

THE FACT OF CHRIST'S SECOND COMING, AND WORDS USED TO DESCRIBE IT

It may appear strange to speak of Christ's Second Advent as being included in his Incarnation, that is, in the title we have just used, 'The Incarnation—VI'. Probably it would have been more appropriate to have ceased using the word 'Incarnation' a few Studies ago—at his Resurrection. Even so, we are saying that it was Christ—God Incarnate—who ascended to heaven, who is now reigning and who will come again visibly to earth. His humanity is a vicarious one—one lived on our behalf before the Father—so that now he is truly Man in heaven as he will be truly Man when he returns to conclude history as mankind will have lived it.

Terms Used for His Reappearing

The term used most commonly by Christians for his return to earth is 'the Second Coming', but this is not a term used, as such, in the New Testament. Statements such as 'the Son of man coming', 'the Son of man comes in his glory', 'when he comes in the glory of his Father', certainly use the verb 'to come' (*erchomai*) and show that he is coming. 'Coming' is *parousia* in Greek, from the verb *pareimi*. However, there are other verbs used—that he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus', 'When Christ who is our life appears', 'For the Lord himself will descend from heaven', 'But our commonwealth is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior', 'that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed', 'And when the chief Shepherd is manifested', 'by his appearance and his coming'. Five times the term 'appearing' (*epiphaneia*) is used.¹ These are 'the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ', 'the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus', 'by his appearing and his kingdom', 'to all who have loved his appearing', 'the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ'. The verbs 'to come' and 'to appear' are mostly used, which is why we use those terms.

¹ I Timothy 6:14; II Timothy 1:10; 4:1, 8; Titus 2:13.

We will now proceed to look at the Parousia event in the New Testament. Generally this event is linked with glory, and we do not always understand why this should necessarily be so. The fact is that God's majesty and glory are one, as also His authority and glory are one. For the whole earth to be 'filled with the glory of God as the waters cover the sea' means God is King over all creation, for where He is, so is His glory, and where His glory is, there He is King.² The Kingdom of God is 'the Kingdom of Christ and of God' and 'the Kingdom of our Lord and his Christ', hence Christ's coming fills the creation with God's glory.

What we have just read makes an impressive biblical portrayal of the events in which we are living and which lie ahead, and whilst some of the language is pictorial and apocalyptic, yet we should not gain knowledge of these events without seeing the powerful reality of them, and relating to them in wonder and humility, and seeing ourselves in them, and as part of the Divine action of history.

THE PAROUSIA AND ITS GLORY IN THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS

In one sense the Ascension and Parousia are almost one. Certainly descriptions of them are cast in similar language. In Matthew 24:29–31 Jesus describes his coming or 'appearing':

Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken; then will appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory; and he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

Later, in the same discourse Jesus said, 'When the Son of man comes in his glory and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne'. At the time when he was being judged, Jesus told the high priest, 'But I tell you, hereafter you shall see the Son of man seated at the right hand of Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven'. The 'power' here was a Jewish name for God, a circumlocution used because Jews were reluctant to utter His name.

In Matthew 24:3, 27, 37, 39 we have 'the coming of the Son of man', and 'coming' is of course 'parousia'. Mark also has references to Christ coming in glory:

For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of man also be ashamed, when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels (8:38).

As in Matthew, Christ refers to his coming, 'And then they will see the Son of man coming in clouds with great power and glory' (13:26).

THE STORY OF THE PAROUSIA IN THE ACTS, EPISTLES AND THE REVELATION

The Parousia in the Acts

We saw in Acts 1:9–11 the prophecy of Christ's return in the cloud of glory. In his Pentecostal speech Peter refers to 'the day of the Lord' (2:20) and in apocalyptic terms which are almost the same as in our Lord's Olivet discourse. In 3:19–21 Christ's purposive return is described:

² Much of the material covered in describing the event of the Parousia in the New Testament is based upon Studies 13 and 14 in the Series of *The Story of Glory* given to NCTM Classes in 1998 and 1999, presently being published under the name of *All Cry Glory!: The Story of Glory* (NCPI, 1999).

Repent therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out, that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus, whom heaven must receive until the time for establishing all that God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old.

Acts 17:30–31 certainly points to a day when Christ shall judge the world:

The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all men everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed, and of this he has given assurance to all men by raising him from the dead.

Undoubtedly the preaching of the Kingdom of God (Acts 8:12; 19:8; 28:23, 31) included the eschatological matter of Christ's Parousia.

The Parousia in the Epistles

In his Epistles Paul makes a number of references to the Parousia, some of which he links with glory. For example, in Romans 5:2 he talks about the hope of rejoicing in the glory of God which is obviously in the future. More clearly he says in Colossians 3:4, 'When Christ who is our life appears, then you will also appear with him in glory'. In Titus 2:13 he speaks of 'awaiting our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ'. So he can speak of 'all who have loved his appearing' (II Tim. 4:8; cf. 1:10; 4:1). He tells the Thessalonians that they 'turned to God from idols, to serve a living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come' (I Thess. 1:9–10).

The majesty and glory of that return is especially described in I Thessalonians 4:15–17:

For this we declare to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, shall not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the archangel's call, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first; then we who are alive, who are left, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air; and so we shall always be with the Lord.

No less powerful is the passage of I Corinthians 15:51–55, and although it does not speak explicitly of Christ's appearing, yet this is concluded as the use of the trumpet is common to both the passages here quoted. Of course in verse 23 Paul has spoken of Christ's coming, 'But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ':

Lo! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. For this perishable nature must put on the imperishable, and this mortal nature must put on immortality. When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: 'Death is swallowed up in victory.' 'O death, where is thy victory? O death, where is thy sting?'

It is evident that the picture such as Paul depicts in these two passages was in the minds of his well-taught followers. As we keep suggesting, the picture was one of glory. If we add Philippians 3:20–21, 'But our commonwealth is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will change our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power which enables him even to subject all things to himself', then we see our glorification depends upon his ultimate appearing. We sum up, that the appearing (parousia) of Christ in glory will be the moment of the glorification of the redeemed.

Paul uses the term 'coming' or 'parousia' in I Corinthians 15:23; I Thessalonians 2:19; 3:13; 4:15; 5:23; and II Thessalonians 2:1, 8, 9. James uses it in 5:7, 8 where he refers to 'the coming of the Lord'.

The First Epistle of Peter has references which fit the Pauline. In 4:13 Peter writes, ‘But rejoice in so far as you share Christ’s sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed’. Then in 5:1–4 he exhorts the kind of pastoral ministry which will result in ‘the unfading crown of glory’:

So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ as well as a partaker in the glory that is to be revealed. Tend the flock of God that is your charge, not by constraint but willingly, not for shameful gain but eagerly, not as domineering over those in your charge but being examples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd is manifested you will obtain the unfading crown of glory.

Two Peter also speaks of the ‘coming of our Lord’ (1:16) and mentions those who doubt as to Christ’s coming (3:3ff.). In II Peter 3:1–13 the author speaks powerfully of the day of the Lord. Verse 10 speaks of extraordinary phenomena which will accompany that return:

But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a loud noise, and the elements will be dissolved with fire, and the earth and the works that are upon it will be burned up.

The Parousia in the Book of the Revelation

The Book of the Revelation, contrary to general opinion, does not explicitly speak much of his coming. The first chapter does speak of it in verse 7:

Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, every one who pierced him; and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of him. Even so. Amen.³

It must be said that all events described throughout the Book lead up to that coming. Without them the Day of the Lord cannot come. In the last chapter there is explicit anticipation of his coming in verses 12 and 17:

Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense, to repay every one for what he has done.

The Spirit and the Bride say, ‘Come.’ And let him who hears say, ‘Come.’ And let him who is thirsty come, let him who desires take the water of life without price.

Of course, as we have indicated, the whole Book of the Revelation is occupied with all the events which lead up to the Parousia.

LOOKING AT THE PAROUSIA

When we say ‘looking’ we mean that when we take two primary things into consideration and then view their outworking, that the Parousia not only as a concept but as a Divine reality is formed for us. The two things are (i) the Old Testament shape of things with the prophetic pronouncements of the Day of the Lord and the renewal of creation, and (ii) the New Testament shape of things with the prophetic pronouncements being fulfilled in and by Christ so that in him the renewal of creation takes place and all things are summed up, filled up, reconciled and harmonised by him. In this sense he—Christ—is the Parousia.⁴ The remarkable shape of things in Old Testament history, and the marvel of the prophets, their lives, functions and message should be fully explored.

³ This is based on Zechariah 12:10.

⁴ For ‘summed up’ see Ephesians 1:9–10. For ‘filled up’ see Ephesians 4:10. For ‘all things reconciled’ see Colossians 1:20. For ‘all things harmonised’ see Colossians 3:14. Christ takes all of history to accomplish this. It is not just done in the eschaton and its telos.

As we often repeat, the matter that we must keep in mind is genuinely seeing—through the Holy Spirit—all the elements we have set out in the preceding paragraph. We may grasp the idea—or ideas—and so have the theology of them, but may miss the essence and the glory of them, the living, palpable reality of them. Consider the terms we have used, such as ‘coming’, ‘presence’, ‘appearing’, ‘descending’, and these linked with the celestial glory being in them, the confrontation of this world by the Divine, and the actions of him who is Judge and Deliverer. Think of the universal resurrection of millions now counted generally as dead, the revelation of the Divine glory of the eternal Triune God, and the sanctification, glorification and perfection of all things—everything coming to its rightful, functional and noble place through Christ the King of the ages—then it is simplistic to say that this will be quite astonishing. Without the compassion of God and the revelating power of the Holy Spirit such confrontation of glory would undo us. Instead, it makes us marvellously aware of God working in history out of His love for us, and His determination that He shall make us holy like Himself and formed into the image of His Son for life and eternity. As we keep saying, we cannot separate any of the works of Christ, for none stands on its own but each is part of the all, and so understanding of the Parousia and faithful anticipation of the Telos is essential to true living.

THE NOW TIME: THE IN-BETWEEN TIME

When we have the mind oriented to the Eschaton–Parousia–Telos and are thinking of what have been called ‘the End Things’, we of course have to think of the present happenings, the things of the New Time. These are vast and many in number. They occupy the whole ministry of the Church, as the gospel is proclaimed to many nations, and as Christ is working things to their ultimate climax, and doing this from his heavenly Throne, in concert with the Father, and by the power of the Holy Spirit. We cannot deny there is a massive ministry operating throughout the entire world, involved in bringing life to the nations, and putting down the evil of Satan and his world. To be idle—sitters waiting for Christ to come—is not the orientation we should have. Eschaton, Parousia and Telos only have their meaning in the present liberation of sinners and the defeating of the powers of darkness.⁵

A CONSIDERATION: THE PLACE AND ACTION OF THE PAROUSIA

We conclude, then, that the New Testament speaks of the return of Christ to the earth. His Ascension was significant for many reasons which we have set out in our previous Study. His Session at the right hand of God was part of this purpose. The plan of God from before time began its fulfilment with the completed creation, so that we have spoken of ‘the Person and Work of Christ’, his Works prior to his Incarnation and then his Works in that Incarnation, in which we are including his Parousia. It too is a work, as indeed is the Telos. We must think of it this way. Just as the works of the Cross and Resurrection naturally follow his earthly ministry, so his Ascension and Session follow them, and—as we are now seeing—his Parousia and the Telos of all creation will precede the completion of his Session. No one work has any position or operation apart from the other works of Christ. Glancing ahead we see that the Telos brings the renewal of all creation, but that cannot be until Christ returns and so the Day of the Lord arrives and all things are fulfilled. The essence of this present paragraph is

⁵ We have emphasised elsewhere in this Study that the Father and the Son sent the Holy Spirit to be the power for the Church to proclaim the gospel in all the world, and to take the work of Christ’s Incarnation and lead all who would believe into its truth. The work which Christ has done is unintelligible to all until the Spirit takes it as the word of God and brings it to the heart and understanding of willing hearers, or hearers whom God makes willing. So the Eschaton—the age in which we live—is under the Eschatological Spirit on earth, as it is under the Throne of God in heaven where He and the Son reign. In this sense Christ is still Immanuel, and the present age proceeds under this universal Trinitarian direction. The Eschaton is alive and active and steadfastly moving to the Telos.

that *nothing happens apart from Christ*. In nature we may think of causes and effects bringing about situations, but in God's work it is Christ who is working in all things and so effecting them. He—as too his Father—is known to be ‘the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End’.⁶ The Parousia and the Telos work as one work to effect the completion of all things, but they are the work done by Christ himself. Just as he was the Word in the beginning, creating all things, so he is Lord and Word at the end, fulfilling all things.

Of course we must not represent Christ as the One Worker in all this, or even the Prime Mover. All Christ's work is effected in the Trinitarian relationship. We can present the Parousia as issuing from the Father, and the Son's effecting it only by the aid and ministry of the Holy Spirit. We have tried to keep this in mind throughout all our Studies. We have tried to show that Christology is Christ himself in concert with the Father and the Holy Spirit. We have said that God has sent His Son into the world to reveal Him as Father, and the Father and the Son have sent the Spirit into the world to enable us to comprehend all the work of Christ, and so, of the Holy Trinity.

With this in mind we can now move on to see all the works of the Telos.

THE ELEMENTS OF THE TELOS⁷

In this Study we do not intend to examine and seek to manifest all the elements of the Telos. At this point we need to understand what we mean by the term ‘Telos’⁸. We take it to mean the summing up and completing of all things, such as, linked with death, resurrection, the utter destruction of Satan and all evil powers, God's final Judgment completed, the new Heaven and the new Earth, the Fulfilled Kingdom and the completed, effective Everlasting Covenant, the Marriage of the Bride and the Lamb, the Holy City, the gathered Nations as the elect Church, the Ultimate Temple, Paradise and all elements contained in it, and the purpose and action for which the Telos culminates, namely that all things may be sanctified, glorified and perfected. All of these elements are usually gathered together under the heading ‘Eschatology’, and one cannot object to this classification. However, as we have pointed out, there is no such thing, practically speaking, as Eschatology. There is Christ working and the Father and the Spirit working with him.⁹ They have had, together, a plan from before creation, and it incorporates all we have included in the first sentence of this paragraph. History has always been moving steadily from its beginning to its completion, from what is protological to what is eschatological and teleological. Eschatology is a theological classification and, as such, most valuable.

We also need to remind ourselves that when Christ ascended, his work being completed, he began the work from the Throne to which he ascended. What he had done was quite unintelligible to even his disciples, and for this reason the Holy Spirit was sent to be

⁶ cf. Revelation 1:8, 17; 21:6; 22:13.

⁷ We are not seeking, here, to unfold and examine the Telos as the ultimate work of Christ. If that were the case then we would be examining each element in detail. What we are most interested in is living in prolepsis—something we discuss below. The fact is we are now living and need to be creatures of hope along with faith and love. If we lose the dynamic of hope—or never obtain it—then we are of all creatures most miserable. Life will wither away as the years pass and death will be pathetic or horrible confrontation.

⁸ By ‘eschatology’ we understand the things which work towards the culmination of God's plan for creation. This term is also used by many to mean all that happens at the end of time—as we called it. The term ‘Telos’ is used more sparingly, but in these Studies I am using it to mean the actual culmination, the completion and fulfilment of all the elements we use in the study of eschatology. Later we will have to see what the *Telos* leads to, in its turn.

⁹ Theologically we have the categories of Christology, Pneumatology and Patrology—that is, the Person and Work of Christ, the Person and Work of the Holy Spirit, and the Person and Work of the Father, though for some reason the last one—Patrology—has generally not been so named. What we have tried to do is to show that there are no ‘ologies’. A theological classification may be called ‘Christology’ but that is something we have shaped up for its good purpose. In fact and in life we simply know the living Christ and we know him in the relationship of love, and we worship him, and live and work and serve in him. Likewise with the Persons of the Father and the Holy Spirit.

‘another Counsellor’ and to lead Christ’s people ‘into all the truth’. He gave—and gives—they understanding of all that was accomplished, and at the same time gave them—and gives—understanding of Christ’s continuing work from the Throne, until the moment of the Telos. Without the Holy Spirit there would be no comprehension of the past ages, the present age, and the age to come. That is why the Holy Spirit has often been called Christ’s *alter ego*, but it is better to see that all that Christ does is done in concert with the Spirit, and because in concert with the Spirit, so in concert with the Father. We could equally say, ‘because in concert with the Father, so in concert with the Spirit’. History is Trinitarian to the ultimate degree. This brings us to consider the prolepsis of the Telos, that which roots us in hope in the fullness of God’s plan.

THE TELOS AND THE PROLEPSIS

We have said somewhere that biblical history is composed of three elements:

- (i) God’s **intention**, with its constituent elements;
- (ii) God’s **promises** in relation to that intention; and
- (iii) the ultimate **fulfilment** of that intention, along with the fulfilment of its innate elements.

Within this intention is the creation, and with the creation the Everlasting Covenant of God and His Eternal Kingdom, that is, what are called ‘The Kingdom of God’ and ‘The Covenant of God’. The Telos would have to be the triumph and fulfilment of these. We have to see all the actions of history in the light of these, and these in the light of the actions of God’s history.

Man is not only a part of history but virtually the main part. By creation he is involved in the Kingdom of God—God’s reign and rule—and his whole relational, vocational, marital–familial and sabbath-rest participation is in the Covenant of God. The Kingdom is not an entity but all that is creation and over which God is King. In Himself God is King. Likewise, in Himself God is Covenant, or we could say Covenantal. A true covenant is not a contract but a living relationship of love. If we see God in a pagan fashion then we see Him as omniscient, omnipotent and omnipresent:¹⁰ such a God does not have to relate in the sense we know God relates in love and intimacy to all His creatures. Only when we understand God and His Kingdom, and God and His Covenant, do we understand history.

God has always related to His creation, and especially to Man, by many media, especially by words through which Man can—if he would—understand. The Scriptures are vitally important in this regard, containing as they do words written by human beings and understandable by human beings. Thus the Story of God and Man can be heard and history understood. In this process of time passing, the Father, Son and Spirit give understanding where the wills of human beings are aligned with Theirs. So intention, promises and fulfilment can be traced. In this sense the Bible is a book of one continuous Story.¹¹

Man is in the Story. He may want to opt out of it but Kingdom and Covenant are immutable. Man is centred in these and it is his Story, much as he may dislike it. In the Holy Spirit he simply loves it. We see elements of this story which relate to the Father–Creator,

¹⁰ We do not say that these three adjectives cannot be used concerning God but we must be careful *how* we use them. The thought that God is all-knowing must be understood in the way knowledge is understood and used in the Scripture. It is not that the sum of knowledge is innate in God, for that would make knowledge an entity which God has covered—so to speak. The idea of ‘all power’ being God’s needs to be understood in the way which is God’s use of power. Again, it is not an entity which God possesses. God’s omnipresence is best seen in a Psalm such as the 139th. God does not just fill all things and so is present, for no entity exists apart from God’s creation. When God fills the heart it is the heart which He has created, and His filling it is relational rather than spatial. The Psalms can teach us much regarding these three rather philosophical adjectives.

¹¹ In the light of many of the discoveries of Narrative Theology, we need to realise that human beings are ‘choosy’ and ‘touchy’ about hearing stories. Little children like to feel they are *in* the story they are hearing, that they have been having action in it, and stories which hold no possibility of empathy seem foreign to them. Stories which are dear to lecturers and preachers are often foreign to hearers. The way the Bible has been taught—often by many tellers with different ideas—has spoiled reading the Bible as a story for many folk. God ‘tells’ the Story in the sense that it is His Story, and we relate to it because it is certainly our Story. If not seen as ‘one continuous story’ then it cannot be appreciated, or wholly rejected.

the Son–Creator and the Spirit–Creator, Who are at the same time Father–Redeemer, Son–Redeemer and Spirit–Redeemer. Throughout our Studies we have seen Christ at the centre of history. In him are God’s intention, promises and fulfilment. Paul, on a certain occasion, spoke of the centrality of Christ in these three elements of history. He said:

As surely as God is faithful, our word to you has not been Yes and No. For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, whom we preached among you, Silvanus and Timothy and I, was not Yes and No; but in him it is always Yes. For all the promises of God find their Yes in him. That is why we utter the Amen through him, to the glory of God (II Cor. 1:18–20).

The writer of Hebrews tells us that, ‘But as it is, he has appeared once for all at the end of the age to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself’ (9:26), and Peter states that, ‘He was destined before the foundation of the world but was made manifest at the end of the times for your sake’ (I Pet. 1:20). When to this we add the thought that Christ is ‘the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end’, then it does mean that all history is wrapped up in him, and that he comes in the last days, first in his Incarnation, then at Pentecost in the Spirit, and is coming in these last days to complete all things.

We may think that, at best, we are on the sidelines looking at the cavalcade of history. How wrong we would be to think this! We are confronted by the Father sending His Son, by the Son doing the works of the Father unto the Telos, and all these matters are unceasingly brought to us by the Holy Spirit. How then do we, who are in the Story, get a sense of all things? The answer lies in I Corinthians 2:6–14. This passage tells us God had decreed before creation a wisdom for our glorification. This wisdom would cause us to reach glorification, but the contents of the coming glory are beyond our capacity to imagine since we have never seen, heard or conceived such glory. Never mind! The Holy Spirit has revealed, and is revealing them to us intelligibly. Only by the words of the Spirit can we understand them.

Now it is out of such revelation that hope is born. But then revelation is not something simply unveiled for our sight and cognition. Revelation is made—so to speak—in the full light of the human will, by the Divine will. Revelation is to be believed. It is believed in the action of relational response. It is what he is, has done, is doing and will do that Christ is our hope. Hope is a fixed certainty and we have hope that is based on God’s intention, His promises and His fulfilling of these. Hence Paul says, ‘Christ in you [among you] the hope of glory’.¹² In hope we have a foretaste of what is to come. This is sometimes called ‘Hope, the prolepsis’. It means we not only have the information and sense of what is to come, but we are already tasting it—so to speak—and hope keeps us concentrating on the things of the Telos. ‘Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.’ Paul had a very powerful truth when he prayed for the Romans, ‘May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope’.

THE PROMISES OF THE OBJECTS OF HOPE

These are, ‘the hope of glory’; ‘the hope [of] the resurrection’; ‘our hope of sharing the glory of God’; ‘the hope of righteousness [justification]’; ‘the hope of salvation’; ‘Christ Jesus our hope’; ‘our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ’; ‘the hope of his calling’; along with ‘his glorious inheritance in the saints’; ‘the hope of the gospel’; ‘the hope of eternal life’. It is because God is ‘the God of hope’ and our hope is ‘laid up in heaven’ that hope ‘hopes all things’, and even ‘in hope believes against hope’. As Paul says, ‘If for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all men to be pitied’. It is hope that is for here and eternity—how could it be otherwise and be hope?—for Christ

¹² The preposition here can mean ‘in’ or ‘among’. In any case it is speaking of a corporate ‘you’, meaning ‘in, or among, all of you’. Hope is something we have corporately as the Church, so we can encourage one another with the same hope.

himself is our hope, and within us (among us) he is ‘the hope of glory’. That is why we are enjoined to ‘seize the hope that is before us’ and to ‘hold fast the confession of our hope’.¹³

Each one of these objects of hope is so incredible in its nature and dimensions and what it means for the redeemed persons, that it cannot be humanly grasped. Each, when seen in its implications, strengthens the person who hopes. Yet even this list does not compass the extent of the hope. Because there are many other elements and factors of the Divine intention which do not have the word ‘hope’ attached to them, does not mean that they have not been promised. For God to have an intention makes it to be a matter of hope: it will be fulfilled. Because of this we are going to explore some of the things that were in the beginning and which were intended to be perfected in the Telos, so that seeing these we will have hope expanded, and our assurance strengthened.

At this point we need to advert again to something we have said above, ‘*Now it is out of such revelation that hope is born*’. We began to show that revelation comes in the very action of us being wrought upon by God, given insight into the meaning of His actions in history and given this insight not as a body of spiritual knowledge, but coming into comprehension in our acts of relationship with God, namely in the Kingdom of God and the Covenant of God. All historic acts such as creation, redemption and fulfilment entail human relationships with God; celestial and terrestrial creatures are significant for ever, and for all, and especially for the one who experiences them.¹⁴

Hope, then, is a powerful dynamic, and exists only with faith and love. Each virtue is dependent for its effectivity on the other two. Loss of love means that faith and hope virtually die.¹⁵ It is here, then, that our idea of prolepsis is powerful in motivating us to live in this life in the face of what lies ahead. One John 3:2–3 teaches us this principle:

Beloved, we are God’s children now; it does not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. And every one who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.

Some theologians have the idea that because the Telos and its things are now disclosed to us it is up to us to assist them to come to completion, but prolepsis teaches us that because certain things will be completed we should now live in the light of the knowledge disclosed, be encouraged and strengthened, but still see God as the One Who will bring these things to completion, since He alone knows the way. Our proclivity, in the flesh, to make the gospel an ideology—as humans everywhere see hope only in ideologies—makes it dangerous for us to develop a praxis for our gospel ideology.

Theologically we understand by the word ‘praxis’ that theology has its theory or its principles and we should bring that theory or principles into action. Hope shows us its objects—the things which God will complete. Is it not then reasonable to go ahead and help to bring these to pass? Is not the disclosed hope object a tacit demand to proceed in this way? The answer must be ‘No!’ As Paul said, ‘And I am sure that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ’ (Phil. 1:6). Another Scripture to be linked with this is Philippians 2:12–13:

¹³ Because we wished this particular paragraph not to be interrupted by references so that straight reading of it might prove more effective, we have stated the references in this footnote. They can be checked against the text. They are Colossians 1:27; Acts 23:6; 24:15; cf. 28:20; Romans 5:2; Galatians 5:5; I Thessalonians 5:8; Titus 1:2; 3:7; I Timothy 1:1; Titus 2:13; Romans 8:30; Ephesians 1:18; 4:4; I Thessalonians 2:12; II Peter 1:3–5; Colossians 1:23; Titus 1:2; 3:7; cf. I Peter 5:10; Romans 15:13; Colossians 1:5; I Corinthians 13:7; Romans 4:18; I Corinthians 15:9; 10:23; Colossians 1:27; Hebrews 6:18; 10:23.

¹⁴ I am aware that to speak of ‘experiences’ is anathema in some theological circles. The very objectors have their own experiences of the theology they form, the impressions they gain and the satisfaction felt, but what they see as viable propositions they have formed or understood. It is patently impossible to know the Eternal God, His created humanity and His creation, and remain wholly objective. If this were the case we would need to damn all artists, composers of music, poetry and literature, and even the angelic hosts themselves—to say nothing of singers and musicians of Israel!

¹⁵ This subject needs to be understood in depth and in the way it is seen in the New Testament. Love is the primary virtue, giving power to the other two.

Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for God is at work in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

The tenor of this passage is that we work out the plan of salvation as commanded, but keep in mind that it is God energising us within, working out His will in us, to the Telos.¹⁶

CONCLUSION: LIVING IN FAITH, HOPE AND LOVE

In this last Section we are not talking about a methodology of reaching the Telos. We are not pausing even to discuss the trifold being of these three virtues, or the nature of each of them. Since no one virtue can be separated from the others this is the only way we have to live. It is the way we live. What we need to do here is to enlarge on points we have mentioned above, namely that the Living God is the God of action, which action began for us in God's intention before time. Through time, the Father, Son and the Spirit have worked inseparably in the process of bringing creation to the Telos.

Whilst, perhaps, our biblical knowledge causes us to assent to this, and whilst our theology is in line with it, yet the facing of all God's works, and the comprehension of them in our day by day living is what is essential. Paul utters (Rom. 11:33–36) what is certainly true:

O the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! 'For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counsellor?' 'Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?' For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory for ever. Amen.

Yet God, by His Holy Spirit, has given us understanding of all that He has done, is doing and will do. We recognise we can never encapsulate all of God in our comprehension, but we can stand and contemplate His works. We can pause from our preoccupation with ourselves and our immediate matters, and ponder the vast working of Father, Son and Spirit in what we call 'human history'. It is for us to keep regarding all of this. We need to keep looking at what God intended, at what He has been doing unceasingly and in every aspect, and to be sure that in all works, creational, providential, redemptional and renewing, that He has never done other than everything. Contemplation in the Spirit of God of all these actions and deeds in the light of His Covenant and His Kingdom will surely stimulate us and keep us alive and vital in our actions, in our worship and adoration of Him. Thus we continually are aware that all of eternity and history and the future is ours, as Paul reminds us when he says, 'all things are yours!'¹⁷ This is the point and purpose of us being created, and when it comes to the prolepsis—the tasting and comprehending of the future—well, that is essential to our daily living. If we do not continue in this way then all illnesses, catastrophes, lengthening of our years, weakening of our bodies, and the last phase which can even be a loss of beauty, diminishing of our faculties and the death which draws closer, can dismay us, and we can be afraid of the future—no matter what our formal belief—and terror can come to rule us. When Psalm 139 says of every day of our life, 'When I awake I am still with thee', we live in delight and assurance. The same will be said of us as we pass through death on the way to the Telos, 'Ah, yes, Lord! When I awake I am still with Thee'.

To this the same Psalmist adds, 'As for me, I shall behold thy face in righteousness; when I awake, I shall be satisfied with beholding thy form' (Ps. 17:15).

¹⁶ In Philippians 3:7–16 Paul is speaking of attaining to the Telos. The assurance that he will surely reach it does not make him lax in his concerted endeavours. He is putting everything into it, that—as Peter later put it—he might have an abundant entrance into the Kingdom (II Pet. 1:11).

¹⁷ I Corinthians 3:21.

Christ the Alpha and the Omega

THE TRIUNE GOD'S WORK FOR THE TELOS— THE END FROM THE BEGINNING

INTRODUCTION: CHRIST THE LORD

In our previous Studies we have seen that God has planned the End from the Beginning and that the work which stretches across time for the Creation is a wholly Trinitarian one. The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit were one in creating the world, and are one in upholding all Creation. But simply upholding the Creation is not enough, for God had planned, prior even to Creation, to bring it to a redeemed state in which it would be sanctified, glorified and perfected. Hence, when in Revelation 21:6 God says to John the Seer, 'It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end', He means that His pre-time determination has now been completed. The importance of the works of the Father, the Spirit and Christ as being the works of the economic Trinity—the works *ad extra*—done together, becomes clearer when we know that without the Spirit there would be no life, that the Word–Son upholds all things by 'the word of his power', and that the goal of the works is that 'God [the Father] may be all in all'. Our particular aim in our Studies is to see the Person and Work of Christ, and to see it in the context Christ the Son has in relation to the other Persons of the Trinity.

When, then, in Revelation 21:6 God says to John the Seer, 'It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end', what He means is not only a statement of His eternal Being, but that He has begun the Creation and has brought it to its Telos. This is clear in Revelation 21:6, 'It is done!' His being the Alpha and Omega is then a comment on His having completed all things. In Revelation 1:12–20 there is a vision of the risen Jesus who is undoubtedly the Priest–King, and he tells John who was terrified, 'Fear not, I am the first and the last, and the living one; I died, and behold I am alive for evermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades'. This is a parallel claim to the one his Father makes in 21:6. Again, in Revelation 22:12–13 Jesus says, of himself, 'Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense, to repay every one for what he has done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end', and he means that as the Son of God, the Word of God and the Christ of God he has been working with the Father to complete the End (Telos) from the Beginning. He did not begin to work in his incarnation, but before Creation in being one with the Father, and at Creation in the work of the Triune God. He is then to be seen as Initiator—Alpha—of all things concerning the plan of God, and is also to be seen as the Completer—Omega—of the same.

CHRIST BEFORE AND IN ALL THE SCRIPTURES

This is another way of saying that Christ who was ever 'the Word' and ever 'the Son', whose testimony as Jesus was and is always 'the Spirit of prophecy', was never absent from the Trinitarian works *ad extra*, has always been in what we have called 'the counsel of God', and we will speak more at length of this 'counsel' at a later point in this Study. We have dealt with this whole matter in two previous Studies—those of March and April—'Comprehending the Son of God, Also Known as "The Word" Who Became Man' and 'Christ in All the Scriptures: The Pre-Incarnate Yet Always Coming Christ', and it would be good for us to read these again before proceeding with this present Study.

In brief, what we need to see is that the one who is Word–Son was in the Trinity before time, when Creation and its Telos was planned. He was working in the creation of the world, and was the One upholding all things by the word of His power since in him all things subsist or hold together. It is to understand that he was always present in not only the Creation, but also the whole saga of human history, which we call *heilsgeschichte*, or ‘salvation history’. Becoming Incarnate, he has continued in that history, and still does as Lord over all Creation. His present work in the Session and its climax which will eventuate with his Parousia, speaks of his triumph as Prophet, Priest and King, that is, the Second Adam. What are most important are the Trinitarian works *ad extra* covered in the Book of the Revelation, where the term ‘God and the Lamb’ are important and equate with ‘the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ’ (11:15).

In order to see these works *ad extra* of the Triune God we will look at what we might call the Trinitarian work from the beginning to the end—that which we have briefly surveyed above. The early Church was confident that their Lord was eternal and he had become a human being at Bethlehem, and continues ever to be the New Man—the Second Adam—in the vast work which will bring us to the Telos. We need, then, to scan the works *ad extra* of the Godhead so that we now understand Christ as the eschatological Lord and his works of God’s history. Also Paul’s summing up of these shows the unity of the Father and the Son in the plan and promises of God:

As surely as God is faithful, our word to you has not been Yes and No. For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, whom we preached among you, Silvanus and Timothy and I, was not Yes and No; but in him it is always Yes. For all the promises of God find their Yes in him. That is why we utter the Amen through him, to the glory of God (II Cor. 1:18–20).

Firstly, however, we need to look at what we might call ‘The everlasting counsel of God’.

THE EVERLASTING COUNSEL OF GOD: ‘THE WHOLE COUNSEL OF GOD’

Ephesians 1:11–12 states, ‘In him, according to the purpose of him who accomplishes all things according to the counsel of his will, we who first hoped in Christ have been destined and appointed to live for the praise of his glory’. The word ‘counsel’ covers the idea of intelligence and wisdom, and so the verses are speaking of the wisdom and will of God, or ‘the wise counsel’ of God, which is virtually His plan for history. Ecclesiastes 3:11 says, ‘He has made everything beautiful in its time; also he has put eternity into man’s mind, yet so that he cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end’. Isaiah is God’s voice that speaks about His own wise will:

Remember this and consider,
recall it to mind, you transgressors,
remember the former things of old;
for I am God, and there is no other;
I am God, and there is none like me,
declaring the end from the beginning
and from ancient times things not yet done,
saying, ‘My counsel shall stand,
and I will accomplish all my purpose’
(Isa. 46:8–10).

It is interesting that God says He declares ‘the end from the beginning’, but then in Amos 3:7 He speaks by another prophet, ‘Surely the Lord GOD does nothing, without revealing his secret to his servants the prophets’. Probably this revealing of His actions is primarily to Israel, but it means that by recourse to Israel’s writings we can know what God does from

the beginning to the end.¹ In Romans 11:33 we have an ejaculation from Paul, ‘O the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!’ It would seem from this statement that Paul is saying we cannot by our human reasoning understand God in what He does. Whilst He tells us what He is about, yet we cannot gauge or analyse that.

The will of the serpent of Genesis 3, ‘that ancient serpent, who is the Devil and Satan’, opposes the wisdom and will of God. Fallen Man follows the same track. Jeremiah 10:23 says, ‘I know, O LORD, that the way of man is not in himself, that it is not in man who walks to direct his steps’, and that is why ‘he cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end’ (Eccles. 3:11). He alone is wise who knows the will of God (Eph. 5:17).

We see, then, that God has opened His will and way to the faithful person and the faithful community—Israel and the Church. He has done this through His prophets in whom the eschatological Spirit, ‘the Spirit of prophecy’, has ever worked. As Jesus told his disciples, ‘he will declare to you the things that are to come’ (John 16:13). Of course, declaring things to come is from the first prophecy in Genesis 3:15 until God declares at the time of the new heaven and the new earth, ‘It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end’, and this is saying that all events predicted have now been fulfilled. This means that God has accomplished ‘all things according the counsel of His will’. What has been accomplished can be more easily opened to us through the Spirit than things which are yet to come. One example of this is that Christ’s works which have been done can be proclaimed. Whilst he alone has worked those works and knows them, yet the proclamation of them is powerful when the Spirit communicates them. Thus Christ does the works and the Spirit formulates ‘the word of the works’.

In line with God’s opening of His counsel to His believing people is the whole word of God, that is, the Scriptures. In them we have everything laid out in proper order. We have said in these Studies that God’s history is seen in (i) His **intention**—His ultimate Telos; (ii) His **promises** that the Telos will be fulfilled; and (iii) the **fulfilment** of that Telos. When we assume that Scripture covers these three principles and that there is a special order of telling them, so that the Scriptures constitute ‘the Story of God’, then we find that order is composed of (i) the Proton;² (ii) the developing Story—‘the counsel of His will’—being worked out to; (iii) the Eschaton which in its turn leads to the Telos. That covers what we call ‘salvation history’ or the entire ‘Story of God’.

We are especially keeping in mind the Person and Work of Christ, of whom Paul said, ‘For all the promises of God find their Yes in him. That is why we utter the Amen through him, to the glory of God.’ It is Christ we see as ‘in all the Scriptures’, Christ through whom ‘the counsel of His will’ is constantly being worked out. We place much reliance on the fact that the Son, like his Father, is ‘the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end’. He, with the Father and the Spirit of God, is ‘always working’ (cf. John 5:17).

FROM THE BEGINNING TO THE END: FROM THE PROTON TO THE ESCHATON

We work on the basis that the first few chapters of Genesis are protological. By this we mean that Creation and the beginning of human history is protological. We see ‘protological’ to mean that the whole Creation is for a certain purpose in God’s intention, and contains for the most part all that will be manifested in completion in the Eschaton–Telos climax. It is at the

¹ Of course the New Testament writings carry on and develop these Old Testament teachings.

² I am aware that the word ‘proton’ is normally understood as ‘A unit constituent of matter associated with (or consisting of) an invariable charge of positive electricity’ (Shorter Oxford Dictionary, vol. 2, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1986, p. 1694), but my reasoning is that if there is an eschaton theologically, then the indications of Genesis chapters 1 to 3 constitute a proton.

same time antitypical of the things of the Eschaton. This will especially be so in regard to Man's creation, his being placed in Eden, the making of Eden and its being the paradigm of the 'all things' which come to their fulfilment through the Eschaton. We need to keep in mind the two great biblical truths of the Kingdom of God and the everlasting covenant of God. They are necessary keys to our understanding of the Proton. We see all protological elements in the setting of God's day of rest or His sabbath, and both the kingdom and the covenant are linked with it.

Before we look in particular at the things of Eden we must see that Man was created outside of Eden, that Eden was especially made for Man to inhabit as he was taken from outside and placed inside Eden. Genesis chapters 1 and 2 are complementary accounts of Man's creation, as Man—the man and the woman—were given the mandate in chapter 1:

And God blessed them, and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.' And God said, 'Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food' (Gen. 2:28–29).

Here we take 'fill the earth' to mean, 'Fill it with all that is Eden. Expand Eden. Edenise all the creation presently outside of Eden.' This interpretation will substantiate itself as our Study progresses. Certainly, at the end of time, through the Second Adam, this is what happens. We now proceed to nominate the things of Eden, and endeavour to show their continuance in both God's history—what we called 'the developing Story'—and the Eschaton.

At this point we need to say that when Adam failed in Eden, then later Israel saw Abraham as in some way being God's replacement Adam, and then in a somewhat different way, Israel. Israel as a nation was there to fulfil the mandate given to created Man. In a sense Israel was 'Adam' and the land was 'Eden'. Later Christ is seen by the Church as the True, but Second, Adam, and the Church as his Eve, so that the Story of God moves through these various stages, always having primal Man and Eden in mind. The Proton is the basis of the Eschaton.

The Sabbath Established and Eden a Participator in It

The 'all things' of Eden which we discuss below must be seen too in the context of God's seventh day of rest. This day is said in Genesis 2:1–3 to complete the creation.³ Whilst the sixth day rounded off the acts of creation in the creation of Man, yet Man is not the ultimate. The seventh day of rest is the ultimate. It is the only thing—let alone day—which is sanctified throughout Creation. It came to be known in Israel as the Sabbath, and as having its being rooted in Creation, so being the gift of God for Man to have rest, and especially for Israel to have weekly rest whereas in Egypt they had worked continually without a rest respite. For Israel it also had salvation connotation because of salvation from Egypt's slavery. All Creation was to have its rest. We take it that it was an ordinance of the 'everlasting Covenant' and is for all Creation. Israel was called to live in it—this hallowed rest. Whatever person or thing comes into contact with what is holy by God's sanctifying is of itself sanctified by that contact if the contact is appropriate. 'The altar sanctifies the gift', is the way Christ put it in Matthew 23:19 as he quoted the principle from Exodus 29:37. When Uzzah touched the lurching ark of God to steady it he was destroyed, because his act was inappropriate.

Without doubt Eden was within the sabbath rest of God, and that included its human inhabitants. We mean that the most exalted state of being existed in Eden, for God's rest is ever available to Man, and it was dynamic for true human living as Christ later expounded it to be when he showed, 'The sabbath was made for man, not man for the sabbath'.

Its treatment in 'the developing Story of God' is especially powerful when it comes to Israel. Israel's fortunes are related to its keeping or non-keeping of the sabbath. The life of

³ The book *Theology for a New World* by Herbert W. Richardson (SCM, London, 1968) has a view of God's rest—the Sabbath—as the total goal of the Telos.

shalom or no *shalom* is linked with covenantal obedience in all its forms. Christ when he came offered the ‘rest of God’ in Matthew 11:28–30:

Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

It is when we come to the New Testament that we see how intimately the Sabbath is linked with the New Covenant. In Hebrews 3:7 to 4:14 the writer deals with the Sabbath as part of the eschatological order. Indeed, for him, the Sabbath is the whole Eschaton. The ‘end of man’, as has been said, is certainly to glorify God and be glorified by Him. The holiness and rest which the innocent couple would have known in Eden will pervade all the Holy City and its Garden, which makes it Paradise, the true Eden.

The Matter of Eden and Its Constituent Elements

The features of the Eden of Genesis—if we may call them that—are certainly the features of the ultimate Eden as we see it in the last two chapters of the Book of the Revelation. Our thesis is that as Man was designed for Eden and given the mandate of his vocation within Eden, then the reality of Eden will always be with him, and he will look, by faith, for the realising of these in the Eschaton–Telos.⁴ Eden has gathered up the meaning of ‘the place of delight’, but there are other interpretations, most of which are similar.

The following are the features some commentators have seen regarding Eden; namely, it was a habitation of God, a place of worship—perhaps a worship-mountain—a garden, a river, a city, and the home of Man, that is, the man and the woman who were the primal couple. Eden can be called the place of marriage, for the marriage was first enacted in Eden. For the man (Adam) it was the place of naming the animals, these being made by God before Eve was created from man. What we will now proceed to do is to examine these features and see how they figure in the development of the Story of God and in the Eschaton–Telos time.⁵

The Garden

Eden is always associated with gardens. In fact the terms ‘Eden’ and ‘Paradise’ have passed into regular language usage. It has the general meaning of ‘a place of delight’. The garden was watered from a subterranean supply. It had trees which were richly fruitful. In the midst of the garden were two trees, one ‘the tree of the knowledge of good and evil’ and the other ‘the tree of life’. It is here we begin to sense something metaphorical, but we cannot be certain.

What do we see about Eden as a garden once Man was expelled? One thing is clear: Man is nostalgic for Eden. The memory of it seems to be in Man. Theologians see the Canaan promised to Abraham as the new or second Eden. Noah, virtually, could have been the second Adam but failed to be it. In rabbinical theology Abraham was the second Adam, and Sarah the second Eve. Israel had its own holy land with features such as in Eden which we will examine. Its beauty and fecundity are somehow linked with covenantal obedience and disobedience, with blessing and cursing.

History shows Man seeks to create Eden, garden-wise, dominion-wise and paradise-wise, wherever he is. He makes his compensatory Edens as and where he can.

In terms of Eschaton–Telos, Eden appears in great glory at the climax of history. We will have to see that—in addition to being God’s Holy Garden—it is the Holy City, the Church, and the New Jerusalem, the Sanctuary and so the place of ultimate worship.

⁴ We have devised the term Eschaton–Telos because Eschaton refers to the last days or era of the conclusive things, but the conclusion itself is the Telos. Hence the term is inclusive and functional.

⁵ Here I acknowledge that much of the material which now follows to the end of the Study is based on a book I wrote titled, *Creation, the Holy Spirit and Glory*, published by Redeemer Baptist Press, Castle Hill, 1999. I recommend that we also read that expanded version.

The City

At first sight it would be difficult to see it as a city, the main reason being that a modern city—and even some ancient cities—are places of reasonable or high density population. A city is really a place of community, and of course we name places as villages, hamlets, towns or cities according to their population and living area. We do not take the liberty, exegetically, of seeing the ultimate City of God and reading back into Eden the matter of the elect people, ‘the multitude which no man can number’, and say they all were in the loins of Adam, that as he called his wife Eve ‘because she was the mother of all living’, in her ‘all living’ were yet to be, but they would be. Adam was, then, ‘father of all living’, something Romans chapter 5 well bears out. More, they were the family of God, and He was present. We can say, ‘the city was in mind’, but it was more than that; it *was* ‘the City of God’.

Cities figure largely in the history of mankind. Genesis 10 speaks of Nimrod who ‘hunted men before the Lord’, and who thus had a kingdom,⁶ and that in 11:1 men migrated from the east, the direction in which Cain had gone—‘east of Eden’—that the idea of Babel was conceived, and they wanted to have an impregnable city, and with it a city watchtower. So we could elaborate, but the later Babylon becomes a byword for an evil city, and later, in the book of the Revelation, Babylon is the Unholy City, the Woman who is ‘the mother of harlots’, and so on.

As for another holy city: that would be Jerusalem with all its elements of the Temple; Mount Sion as a royal place of dominion, as her reputation grew, until the prophets were not thinking of her so much geographically, but as being in essence, Eden, the garden city, and the world-centre of all worship. Indeed expounding her as the world city in all power. In the New Testament ‘the Jerusalem which is above’ is ‘the mother of us all’ (cf. Gen. 3:20). The Church (*ecclesia*) is the equivalent of Israel who was the congregation (*qahal*) of God, the wife of Yahweh, as the Church is the Bride of Christ.

The ultimate City is the Bride (Rev. 19:6–9) and in Revelation 21:1–27 she is shown as something beautiful and powerful, the very antithesis of the Unholy City, Babylon. Babylon is judged and is eradicated. The Holy City is ‘beautiful for situation’, and beautiful for contemplation and function. Ancient cities had dense walls and gates to keep out the enemy. Now in the Holy City there are no enemies. The long haul of the nations has come to its completion. The gates are opened day and night—there is no day and night there!—and the nations pour into this beautiful abode where there are ‘many mansions’. The kings of the nations will bring their glories into it, and what glories are there which are not moral–spiritual ones? What a City of glory it is!

Whilst we see the innumerable materials which speak of the Holy City we should not forget (i) that the marriage of the primal couple is protological of the ultimate Marriage, and (ii) that Eden would have been the centre of the earth for the whole family of God, and was intended to be so. Virtually the Genesis Eden was God’s Holy City. We gain much by comparing the Jerusalem City with the Edenic one, especially in Psalm 46, where it has the River of God, the Presence of God and the worship of God, all living and active in her midst. As the Story of God has proceeded towards this point we have seen that the Warrior Bridegroom has pursued the enemies of God and defeated them. Christ is in all of this.⁷

The River of God

The subterranean river which emerged in the centre of Eden watered entire Eden and, on reaching Eden’s perimeter then broke into four streams or rivers. Water is always associated with life. God is called ‘the Fountain of Living Waters’ (Jer. 2:13; 17:13). Even though Man

⁶ The idea of building a city was to establish one’s family or dynasty without covering the earth in accordance with the Genesis 1 mandate. It would seem that Nimrod hunted men who were not just of his family or clan, and so could form a city-community which was controlled by a leader such as Nimrod. ‘City’ in fact would mean ‘kingdom’.

⁷ The book of Jacques Ellul *The Meaning of the City* (Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1970) is well worth reading as an expanded commentary on the idea of the city as both good and bad.

is ultimately cut off from Eden, Eden is not cut off from Man, for its River flows out to the world. When we pick up the theme in Israel, Psalm 46:4–5 is one of many such psalms which immediately confronts us: ‘There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy habitation of the Most High. God is in the midst of her, she shall not be moved; God will help her right early.’ The Psalms and the prophecies make much of God’s River and of His watering the Holy Land of Israel. For interest read Psalm 1; 36:8–9; 65:9–10; Isaiah 41:17–20; 43:19–20; 44:1–4; 55:1ff. There is the great prophecy of Ezekiel 47:1–12 which is a picture of the River of God watering the Holy Land (Eden) and flowing on and out into the whole world, turning what was bitter to sweetness wherever it flowed; thus bringing life to all.

In the New Testament the River is present. Christ is the One who was with Israel in the wilderness and was the Rock which brought forth water (cf. I Cor. 10:1ff.), but now incarnate, he offered the water of life to the woman of Samaria (John 4:13–15), to all comers (6:35), and then to those who, being thirsty, could *believe* in him and *drink* of him (7:37–39). In the latter case the very River of God would flow from the believer when Pentecost came and the universal gift of the Holy Spirit would be poured out. It is he who comes into every situation of sinful Man by Christ’s work of the Cross and Resurrection. In the hours of the Cross, Christ drew on every ‘water resource’ which was his, then he thirsted terribly so that Man should not thirst. His cry, ‘I thirst’, means that by his suffering he gave access to us to drink the water of life. So in the True Adam all that was lost in the first Adam was—and is being—restored.

What above we called ‘the great prophecy of Ezekiel’ is shown in all its eschatological glory in Revelation 22:1–2:

Then he showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.

We note in passing that the River is fruitful—‘the fruit of the Spirit’, the things of moral glory, all God’s goodness—and that there is healing, healing often meaning salvation, and this is moral healing. Indeed the Tree of Life was central to Eden. The beautiful figure should not charm us away from the heart of the truth it sets out to communicate. Those who hunger and thirst after righteousness are those only who drink of this River. Eden could not be Eden without it. We might also note that Eden began as a garden city and is complete as a garden city. The River flows from the Throne of God and the Lamb. Christ is present in creating this wonderful outflowing.

The Sanctuary

It should go without saying that Eden was the sanctuary of God for Man. Where God is, there is the sanctuary and no building is needed. In Revelation 21:22 it is written: ‘And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb’. The Old Testament portrays God as in His temple. It is a strange statement, ‘His temple’. What would He want with a temple for Himself? It must mean that the temple is all creation—heaven and earth. This makes all creation holy: God sanctifies it by His Covenantal Presence. He is in the temple; all creation must keep silence. They must worship. Thus Habakkuk 2:20: ‘But the LORD is in his holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before him’. This is uttered in the face of idol worship and its foolishness, and its absurd limitations. Just as in Revelation there is no temple, so in Eden there is none. Better still: Eden is His temple. It is the holy place of His habitation. William Dumbrell has brought together certain elements which make the claim for Eden to be a sanctuary valid, as well as set the foundation for the eschatological temple:

Especially significant in the study of biblical eschatology is this concept of the garden as a separate place, a sanctuary. The Garden of Eden is best seen as a special sanctuary, quite unlike the rest of the world. In the

Old Testament Canaan, which is specifically identified as a divine sanctuary in Exodus 15:17 and Psalm 78:54, and Eden are paralleled (Isa. 51:3; Ezek. 36:35), quite apart from the significance of the presence of God in the restricted space of Genesis 2–3. Moreover, Eden (itself necessarily evaluated as the source of the world river system) was clearly conceived of as a mountain sanctuary (Ezek. 28:13–14), which is important since such mountains in the ancient world were deemed basic points of contact between heaven and earth. Eden was the garden of God, the earth center where God was to be found (Isa. 51:3). (In Ezek. 36:33–36 the Garden of Eden is the symbol of fertility, a fitting analogy for the land of Palestine about to be restored. Also in Ezekiel, the divine garden is used in reference to Zion and the temple [47:1–12; Wallace 1985, 85–86].) In the garden of Genesis 2, the sanctuary of the divine, the man is cast in a priestly role. Consider the correspondence between the precious stones set in the breastplate of the high priest in Exodus 28:17–20 and the adornments of the king of Tyre, who is likened to the original inhabitant of the garden, in Ezekiel 28:13. By implication, the original inhabitant of the garden, Adam, is a decidedly priestly/kingly character. If Genesis 1 emphasizes humankind’s kingship, Genesis 2 presents Adam as God’s priest.⁸

There can be no question about Israel being God’s Eden, Israel God’s Adam and so God’s priest. Israel was a priestly nation (Exod. 19:5–6).⁹ In the New Testament the priestly role of Israel is accorded to the Church. The Mosaic forms of temple and worship are transcended by the new worship such as Jesus spoke of in John 4:21–24 (cf. Phil. 3:3). There is no temple by means of which the people of God have access to Him. The Church is the new temple (I Cor. 3:16; cf. Isa. 2:1–3; 56:6–8), but in the final Eden the temple is God Himself and the Lamb.

The Place of the Throne

We note that Adam was created as a prophet, priest and king, and the Second Adam confirms what it was that the first Adam was made to be. The mandate of Genesis 1:28–30 shows that Adam was given kingship over all creation, he being the image of the great King—God. As God’s vice-regent he was to have dominion over all the earth, fighting its dynamic elements and subduing them to his leadership. Man can only rule when he has true glory, that is, moral power. This he lost in the Fall, but the onus is on him to be what he was as created. That mandate has not been withdrawn from him, so that he is not released from his responsibility. He has the thrust of it in his life, though he uses it for his own, perverted desire to rule others. Psalm 2 speaks of the nations rising up against God to liberate themselves from Him, but all rule over all nations is given to Another—God’s Son.

What we should say of the delegated authority to the first Adam and then the Second Adam is that the authority of God is impeccable; it is His Who made the earth, and it is used to make His plan come to fruition at the Telos. Authority never exists for its own sake. The throne room of God is where the moral glory of God is worked out in the history of creation. We see, then, that Christ as the once slain Lamb holds the place of authority in bringing Creation to its ultimate Telos.

The Place of Marriage

In the book *Love’s Most Glorious Covenant*¹⁰ we saw that three elements in Man constitute the image of God: (i) the **vocation** of God’s mandate; (ii) the **marriage**;¹¹ and (iii) the **Sabbath**. Man, occupied in these, is a true inhabitant of God’s Eden.

By the Fall Man refused to fulfil the mandate, the marriage and the Sabbath. In Canaan as the second Eden, Israel was the wife of God. This theme is strong throughout the Old Testament. Eve was the mother of all living and Adam the father of the same. Yet the couple had betrayed the trust and

⁸ W. J. Dumbrell, *The Search for Order: Biblical Eschatology in Focus*, Baker Books, Grand Rapids, 1994, p. 25.

⁹ N. T. Wright in his writings has had much recourse to Jewish thinking. His book *The Climax of the Covenant: Christ and the Law in Pauline Theology* (Fortress Pr., Minneapolis, 1993) helps us to see how Paul would have understood the Old Testament and Jewish thinking, especially about the matters of ‘Adam theology’. See p. 250 on Galatians 6:16.

¹⁰ G. C. Bingham, *Love’s Most Glorious Covenant: Studies in Covenant Theology*, Redeemer Baptist Pr., Castle Hill, 1997.

¹¹ For a wide treatment of this matter see my *The Profound Mystery* (NCPI, 1995).

commission God had given them. Israel was called upon to be the faithful wife of the ‘God of faithfulness’ (cf. Deut. 32:4; Exod. 34:6–7). God’s intimacy with Israel cannot be over-stressed. Passages such as the 1st chapter of Hosea, the 16th chapter of Ezekiel and the 54th chapter of Isaiah all speak of that marital relationship. Without it the marital relationship of Messiah and his Bride would not make sense. The Son becomes a human being in order that, being Immanuel, he might die for his Bride and purify her so that she be fit for heaven and for the Father’s acceptance into participation in the Trinity. The eschatological fulfilment of the primal Edenic couple is the glorious marriage of the Bride and the Lamb. Christ as the Husband fought for this. The Father as the Provider of the Bride had always participated in bringing about this Marriage and welcoming the Bride home to participate in the Divine nature.

The Place of Man—Adam and Eve

In one sense Eden seems to have been created for Adam, but then we see that Adam was created for the glory of God, and God’s glorification of Adam would be the fulfilment of His glory plan for Creation, and would, of course, include all creation. Again we see how Adam failed his responsibility. Israel saw Adam as its father, and had a tradition that one day Adam would be restored to glory. To some, Abraham was the Adam successor mandate his was the most fruitful life of all mankind. His marriage to the Church was ‘to bear fruit for God’ (Rom. or substitute. Christ the Second Adam accomplishes what the First failed to do. In terms of the Genesis 1 7:4; John 15:1–16; Gal. 5:22–23). He has multiplied the Community which began with himself alone, though—at Pentecost—with the entail of ‘the holy remnant’ of Israel. His has been the ministry of ‘filling up the earth’, or, as we have been saying, ‘Edenising it’. This involves the people of God who carry His moral glory to the ends of the earth. In regard to the subduing of the earth, we have seen, via Revelation 21:7, that he has subdued evil principalities and powers, and the recalcitrant wills of sinners, to establish the Kingdom of God as an irreversible reign in the whole Creation of God—that Creation which is both celestial and terrestrial.

So much more could be said but we have substantially covered Eden in its primal manifestation and its order, then the forms it has taken in history and the final form in which we see it in the Telos.

CONCLUSION: OUR UNDERSTANDING AND APPRECIATION OF KNOWING THE END FROM THE BEGINNING—IN CHRIST

We saw in Ecclesiastes 3:11 that God put eternity in Man’s heart so that he could not find out the end from the beginning. Man can know the end from the beginning when he is in God and in Christ. Each has been described as the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End. God has initiated Creation and commenced the outworking of His plan. Eden and the Fall are as much a part of that plan as are other things. The Word–Son as Christ cannot be understood unless we see him at the heart of the full Story of God, for he and the Father are never apart. Nor is the Spirit other than One with Them.

It is by looking at the accomplishment of the Telos—‘the counsel of His will’—that all history, that is, the Story of God, makes rich sense and presents God’s wisdom in a marvellous way. Our next Study will trace the work of the Person of Christ to bring this intention of God to its fullness. It will also help us to see the power and love of Christ as he works in the Story of God to take us up into God, and to share in the life of that Triune Godhead.

'My Lord and my God!': Christ the King of the Ages

INTRODUCTION: THE LAST CHAPTER; THE WHOLE CHRIST

Someone has said, 'It's the last chapter which counts'. What, then, is the last chapter so far as creation is concerned? In our last Study, we looked at the matter of the telos—the climax of creation's history with the making of the now heaven and the new earth. This represents the closing of the *eschaton*, the last age of human history. What we propose to do in this Study is to bring together all threads concerning the teaching of Christ in the wrapping up of Christ's Person and Work.

We have already discussed the titles and offices of Christ in previous chapters and we came up with a number of terms regarding the incarnate Son of God, known as the Man Jesus. Those titles or offices are, the Logos (Eternal Word), the Son of God, the Son of Man, the Suffering Servant, Christ the Prophet, Christ the Priest, Christ the King, Christ the Saviour, Christ the Lord—'the Lord of Glory'. These offices are linked with him being the Second and Last Adam, for the First Adam was prophet, priest and king and head of the human race, but failed in the mandate God gave him both to be and do. In any case, he was protological of the Second Adam who is Prophet, Priest and King, and this is apparent in some sense in Romans 5:12-21. Another Old Testament term pertains to him, namely 'the Seed' as in Genesis 3:15, and as developed in Abraham's case of fatherhood, to be the Seed through whom blessing would come (cf. Gen. 12:7; 13:15; 17:8; Gal. 3:16). In the Old Testament there are other titles which come to be attributed to the Coming One—the Messiah—namely 'a shoot from the stem of Jesse', 'the Righteous Branch', 'Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace'. One of the most powerful of all titles is 'Immanuel'—God with us especially because of its covenantal links, for in covenant God dwells with His people. If we seek further titles then we come to 'the Lamb of God'—'the Lamb standing as though it had been slain'—who is at the same time the Bridegroom—Husband of the Bride who is the Church, just as Yahweh was the Husband of Israel. His love for the Bride draws him to give himself up for her and to purchase her with his own blood. Marital and Salvific concepts unite to make him 'the Head of the Body'. We see he is also our Elder Brother in the Family of God, and the idea of 'Everlasting Father' is linked with God giving him the Children.¹ Again, he is the one Mediator between God and Man, and in Hebrews is the Mediator of the New Covenant. Hebrews shows him to be the High Priest, and as such the Intercessor or Intervener for Man—as Paul also emphasises in Romans 8:34 and the writer of Hebrews in 7:25. In I Corinthians 10:4 he is called 'the Rock' because in the wilderness he was smitten in order to give water to parched Israel. In John's Gospel there are the seven 'I am' (*ego eimi*) sayings which make him 'the Bread of Life' (6:35, 48),² 'the Light of the world' (8:12; 9:5), 'the Door' (10:7, 9), 'the Good Shepherd' (10:11, 14), 'the Resurrection and the Life' (11:25), 'the Way, and the Truth, and the Life' (John 14:6), and 'the True Vine' (15:1, 5). In John 15:12-17 (cf. John 3:29; 15:13; Luke 7:34) Jesus proclaims that those who keep his commandments are his friends and thus shows himself as their Friend. It would not be difficult to show that he is the Incomparable Lover. In regard to things eschatological he is

¹ Hebrews 2:11-12, Psalm 22:22, John 20:17, and Matthew 28:10 refer to him as the Elder Brother. Hebrews 2:13 and Isaiah 8:17-18 speak of him in his fatherly character. This is His Sonship under the Father which causes him to be one with the Father and carry that Father's characteristics. In John 21:5 Jesus asked, 'Children, have you any fish?' Note John the Apostle's fatherly address to his readers in his Epistles—I John 2:1, 18, 3:18, 5:21, and III John 4. See also Paul in I Thessalonians 2:11-12.

² The verse says, 'I am the bread of life; he who comes to me shall not hunger, and he who believes in me shall never thirst'. This means he is also 'the water of life'.

‘the Lord of the sabbath’, and in fact Lord of all things (Matt. 12:8; Eph. 1:20-22; Rom. 14:9) for the climax of history (I Cor. 15:24-28), who is ‘King of kings and Lord of lords’ (Rev. 1:5) and at the same time the Rider on the white horse (Rev. 19:13) and the ultimate Judge of all creatures and powers (Acts 10:42; 17:31; cf. John 5:26f.). He is the King of the Kingdom along with his Father (Eph. 5:5; Rev. 11:15).

Christ before the Father

All the above terms, titles and offices, when gathered together into one collection as in the paragraph above, add up to something of a wonderful nature. We must first see what he is *before* God, that is, His Son, the Eternal Logos, the Father’s Co-Creator by which the worlds were made, and which are being ever upheld by his powerful word:³ so one were and are they in the work of creation! They are ever one in the work of salvation, ‘My Father is working still, and I am working’. As God is ‘the Father of glory’ (Eph. 1:17), so the Son is ‘the Lord of glory’ (I Cor. 2:8). He is the Way, the Truth and the Life of *the Father!* He is nothing apart from the Father. He does all that the Father tells him, and even says that the works he does are those the Father does in him (see John 5:19-24; 8:28-29; 14:10-11). So close is he to the Father. He can claim, ‘I and the Father are one’ (John 10:38; 17:21), and in almost the same breath say, ‘The Father is greater than I’ (John 14:28). So close is he to the Father that he can say, ‘He that has seen me has seen the Father’. He speaks of the glory which the Father had given him before the foundation of the world (John 17:5, 22; 24). So trustworthy is he that the Father has given all things into his hands (John 3:35; Matt. 11:27). All the promises of God which are given to fulfil the Divine Intention find their Yes in him, so that the *telos* is assured (II Cor. 1:19). In the ultimate the Son as the Lamb of God, shares the Father’s throne and His Kingdom, for it is the Kingdom of the Father and the Son (Eph. 5:5; Rev. 11:15). God and the Lamb are both the light of the Holy City as they both-together constitute its Temple (Rev. 21:22). The Son, as his Father, is ‘the Alpha and the Omega’. From the Father’s point of view, Christ is uniquely ‘the sent one’, and then uniquely the one who ‘returns to the Father’ (John 14:1f.; 13:1f.). Thus the Father can speak of ‘my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased’, so that he is called ‘the Son of His love’ (Col. 1:13). So much the one are they that ‘God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself. The Son-for his part-can put down all enemies as he reigns over all things, yet give the ‘secured’ Kingdom to the Father that the Father might be ‘all in all’ (I Cor. 15:28). These ‘all things’ are summed up in Christ (Eph. 1:10).

It is noteworthy that the intimate relationship of the Father and the Son often means they are as Co-Workers (cf. John 5:17, ‘My Father is working still, and I am working’), so that as in history they are ‘Co-Creators’ and ‘Co-Redeemers’, so they are ‘Co-Shepherds’ because the Father is the ‘Good Shepherd’ (Ezek. ch. 34), yet he makes David-the Messiah-to be shepherd over his sheep, and Jesus is thus the ‘Good shepherd’. Jesus is the ‘Light of the world’ and, being light, is as the Father is in the Old Testament, so that in Revelation 21:23 Jesus is ‘Co-Lightbearer’ with him (cf. John 8:12; 9:5). The Father is King of the Kingdom, yet He makes the Son to be King, so that they are ‘Co-Kings’. It is the Father who sets out to reconcile all things, but he does it by the Son, the Reconciler (II Cor. 5:18-19; Col. 1:19-21). From the Ascension onwards Christ is seated on the throne at the right hand of God. In I Corinthians 15:28 the Son insists that the Father be primary, that is, be ‘all in all’. Isaiah 9:6 calls Christ-among other things-‘Everlasting Father’. Indeed in this context the Son that is given carries the attributes that pertain primarily to Yahweh. So much the one are they, without a confusing of the Persons.

³ See I Corinthians 8:5-6, John 1:1-3, Colossians 1:15-20, and Hebrews 1:1-3.

Christ with the Spirit

In regard to Christ being with the Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit being with him, the Spirit is firstly ‘the Spirit of the Father’, he-the Spirit-is ‘the Spirit of His Son’, ‘the Spirit of Christ’, ‘the Spirit of the Lord’, and is one with Christ the Truth as ‘the Spirit of truth, that is, ‘the Spirit who is the Truth’. He is Christ’s alter ego-other self-in that he too is ‘Counsellor’. Having been one with Christ in all his incarnation, life and ministry and elevation to the right hand of God, he is ‘the sent One’ of the Father and the Son. As in Isaiah 11 the Spirit is ‘the sevenfold Spirit’, so in Revelation he is the Spirit of the Sevenfold Church, the seven torches before the Divine throne, the seven eyes and horns of the Slain Lamb, going out into all the earth: He and the Lamb are inseparably one, and in the last chapter he is seen as one with the Bride as together they call ‘Come, Lord Jesus!’ to Christ.

So in the two paragraphs above we see the innumerable names of Christ, his titles and offices in relation to the Father and the Spirit, so that, at the same time, we see their relations to him. This Trinitarian unity speaks of tremendous power, of constant action, of true sovereignty over the whole creation, history and eternity. It increases our vision of Christ and all ‘the deep things of God’. Thus when we see the victory of the Godhead over all perverted and rebellious creatures, and his solemn judgment of all evil forces outside of his redeeming Christ, so then we have had etched for us, in grandeur and splendour, him before whom Thomas fell and cried, ‘My Lord and my God!’

Christ the Lord before Humanity and Humanity before Him

It is now our thrilling task to see that we are before Christ as the humanity he created and sustains. Here the word ‘before’ means our place before him and our relationship with him. Of course; as we have seen, we are firstly ‘before the Father’ and it is this which determines what we are, as humanity. Because we are thinking Christologically we seek now to see what is determined by being ‘before Christ’. It is here we must understand Christ as ‘the only mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus’. As we relate to Christ, so we relate through him to the Father.

If we take the complete material in the section under the heading (above) ‘The Last Chapter: The Whole Christ’, then we have a vast array of names, titles and offices. We cannot extend ourselves to consider every one of them and our relationship to them, but we take some examples. An intimate one would be Christ as the Good Shepherd. What does this mean? We may sentimentalise the twenty-third Psalm but in its context in Israel it was a practical relationship the Israelite had with the Shepherd. The Shepherd was King over Israel. He guarded and guided the flock-Israel. In the New Testament he so loves the flock that he gives his life for it. He always fulfils the functions of the Shepherd in the light of God being the Good Shepherd, Himself. Do we live in the light of this shepherding, and in being intimate with the Shepherd? The same could be said of Christ as *the Intercessor*⁴ Do we live in the comfort and assurance of his unceasing intercession? Again, do we daily live in the thought of Christ being Prophet, Priest and King; of him being the one who definitively defeated Satan and all his evil powers?

The question we are asking is whether we have an academic appreciation of the Person and Work of Christ, and even to the point of being edified by the thought of his titles and offices, and yet have not tasted the intimacy of those titles and offices in a personal way. Is Christology fascinating to our minds without, virtually, ever touching our hearts? Do we live as though his Person is far from us; and not always near through the Holy Spirit and the Word. Indeed, do we have to call Christ down from heaven, or bring him up from the spiritual deeps? When it says, ‘There is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus’, do we believe that he is ever ministering in intercessory and keeping power in a way

⁴ We recognise, of course, that the Holy Spirit is also Intercessor (Rom. 8:26, *passim*), and even that we make intercession for the saints according to the will of God.

of intimacy with us, assisting us in all our lives? Do we know the leading of his Lordship, the nature of his holiness, the quality of his glory, and the love of him as Husband to us all who constitute his Bride?

What, then, of all the titles and offices we have named? Do they all apply both corporately to the Community of Christ, the Church, and personally to each member of that Body? Do the works and their effects in history also encompass us? To take examples again, does the Lordship of Christ exercise us each day as the reality of Christ reigning over the nations of the world? Does being a member of his Body mean intimacy with him, the Head? Does his being the stem of Jesse, the true Tree of life, mean we eat of the Tree of life, drink of the Living Water, eat of the Living Bread, bear fruit from the Vine in whom we abide? These and many other questions come to our lips as we seek to know and worship our Lord and live before him in the Kingdom of God and Christ.

It would seem that our studies in the Person and Work of Christ have been pointless and even misleading if we are not conscious of being ‘before Christ’ as also ‘before the Father’ and ‘with the Spirit’.

CHRIST THE SECOND ADAM

What has been called ‘Adam theology’ is a theology which we derive mainly from Paul’s writings. Once we grasp this ‘Adam teaching’ then other New Testament writers help to fill out that picture. It is interesting that this teaching is connected with death and resurrection in the main passages in which it is set forth, namely Romans 5:12-21 and I Corinthians chapter 15.⁵ Today it is expounded by a whole school of Pauline scholars,⁶ but they in their turn develop the doctrine of the Second Adam from Jewish understandings of Adam.⁷ It is not possible in this paper to cover the ground of Jewish thinking in regard to Adam and Israel, but a quote here from pages 24-25 of Wright’s *The Climax of the Covenant* could be helpful:

Israel’s God will act in history to vindicate his own name by installing his people ‘at his right hand’, ruling over the nations of the world.

It should not be difficult to show how intertestamental Judaism continued and developed this picture though the point may be regarded as controversial in some quarters. It is not for the sake of speculation about the future of ‘man in general’ that Adam is mentioned . . . The reference is always, rather, to the claim: Israel is God’s true humanity. Thus Jubilees, and the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs, align Israel with Adam, and the Gentiles with the beasts over whom Adam rules. 1 Enoch regards Israel as Adam’s true heir. The Wisdom of Solomon asserts that the righteous will be restored to God’s intended place for them as lords of creation. The later writings 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch witness to the same theological position: Israel will be given the rights of Adam’s true heir. The pre-eminence of Adam in Ben-Sira (49.16) parallels that of the great kings David, Hezekiah and Josiah earlier in the chapter. And in the well-known ‘Adam’ references from Qumran, as well as those not so frequently cited, the reference to Adam is one of the many ways in which the sect claims for itself the status of being God’s true Israel, those who are to be seen as his true humanity. The passages in which the giving of the law is made parallel to the creation of humanity (e.g. Ben-Sira 17.1-4) demonstrate the same point; for the law, particularly in the troubled period between 200 B.C. and A.D. 150, was regarded not merely as a general code of ethics, but as the charter of Israel’s national life. As the tension between covenant promises and political reality became more and more acute, the visionaries who bequeathed Israel the apocalyptic writings used the idea of Adam and his glory to assert the centrality of Israel within the divine purposes. That later Rabbinic thinkers made the same

⁵ N. T. Wright and other scholars (see note below) include Romans 1:18ff., Philippians 2:5-11, and Colossians 1:15 in Adam theology. The use, by some, of Psalm 8 must necessarily be linked with Hebrews 2:5ff.

⁶ One of the most interesting and helpful writers on this subject is N. T. Wright in his *The Climax of the Covenant: Christ and the Law in Pauline Theology* (Fortress Pr., Minneapolis, 1993) and *The New Testament and the People of God* (Fortress Pr., Minneapolis, 1992); Wright quotes good contemporary sources. William I. Dumbrell’s various books and especially *The Search For Order: Biblical Eschatology in Focus* (Baker Books, Grand Rapids, 1994), are good on Pauline theology and so Adam theology.

⁷ See N. T. Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant* and the section ‘Adam, Israel and the Messiah’ (pp. 18-40) for a helpful commentary on this Jewish thinking, and certainly Adam in Paul’s theology is based on much of this Jewish thinking.

connection is clear enough from the evidence compiled by Scroggs.⁸ Claims, for instance, about Adam being created in the spot where the temple was to be built are not to be seen merely as speculations about the first man, but as legitimations of Israel.⁹ The rabbis may well not be ‘interested in making Adam into a savior figure who has a personal involvement in the acts or results of the eschatological events.’¹⁰ They do not need such a figure. For them, Adam has become embodied already in Israel, the people of the Torah, and in her future hope.

In Paul, Adam was the head of the human race, destined to fulfil God’s mandate to him of Genesis 1:28-30, but when he fell it was obvious he could not fulfil his role. For Paul, the one-and only one-who can fulfil this role is Jesus of Nazareth, the Messiah, the Son of God. First Corinthians 15:45-50 shows us the different origins of the first Adam and the second Adam:

Thus it is written, ‘The first man Adam became a living being’; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit. But it is not the spiritual which is first but the physical, and then the, spiritual. The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven. As was the man of dust, so are those who are of the dust; and as is the man of heaven, so are those who are of heaven. Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven. I tell you this, brethren: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.

‘The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven.’ This is the difference in origin. Even so, each is described as a man. There can be no question of that. Even so, the first Adam came from the dust and his sin brought death to the whole human race, whereas the second Adam was from heaven and all in him are saved from death. As Paul sums it up in I Corinthians 5:20-23:

But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ.

Romans 5:12-21 speaks of Adam’s salvific work. The obedience which the First Adam ought to have offered, and by which he would have evaded the death which came to him through his disobedience, was offered by the Second Adam, and through that obedience all in the Second Adam have life-life to be realised in full at the parousia of the Second Adam.

The Jewish expectation of the Adam which they saw to be Israel-a corporate being-was somehow linked with the establishment of the final and perfect Eden. This development, as taken up by Paul, was not limited to ‘Israel after the flesh’ but involves the true people of God, as Romans 9 - 11 shows. This true people of God is in Christ who is the Second Adam. Thus the Second Adam was-and is-about fulfilling the mandate given to the First Adam. As Man was locked out of Eden because of his sin, so Man will be admitted to the ultimate Paradise, the true Eden of God, the Holy City. The marriage of the Second Eve will be with the Second Adam. All of this is ‘according to the counsel of his will’, the plan and purpose of God the Father.

There are many implications which stem from this Second Adam. In Romans 5:12-21 it is clear that we who are in Christ are freed from the bondage of death and sin, and reign now in life. Verses 17-18 cover vast ground:

If, because of one man’s trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ. Then as one man’s trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one man’s act of righteousness leads to acquittal and life for all men.

⁸ Wright cites R. Scroggs, *The Last Adam* (Blackwell, Oxford, 1966), pp. 406

⁹ See Scroggs, p. 58.

¹⁰ See Scroggs, p. 51.

Here ‘reign in life’ must be both present and eschatological in nature. The Adam in whom we were all present at the Fall has been supplanted by the Adam who did not fall-not even at the time of Satan’s attempts to tempt him to Adamic sinfulness-so that now we are not ‘in Adam’, but are ‘in Christ’ because of our union with him in baptism. That baptismal union was into his death, his burial and his resurrection, and cut us off from the contrary Adam and his evil. The ‘in Adam all die’ is superseded by the ‘in Christ shall all be made alive’. This ‘all’ means that all who refuse to be in the Second Adam must remain in the First Adam and so must experience the death of that Adam in the form of ‘the second death’. The ‘all’ in Christ experience the eternal life which is in him.

Adam theology really extends to all we know of Christ. One of the most powerful passages concerning it is Ephesians 5:21-33. In this pericope Paul gives us the key to all marriage by stating that Genesis 2:24 is speaking of ‘a profound mystery’. By this he means that the words which there obviously applied to Adam and Eve-and so, by extension, apply to all human marriages-are really speaking of Christ and his church. Thus Ephesians 5:31-32 states, ‘ "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." This mystery is a profound one, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.’ This, then, must mean that the Church is the new Eve, and Christ its Adam. The importance of this is most profound. Not only was the Adam-Eve marriage protological of the eschatological marriage, but the Bridegroom-Bride marriage means that all the elect-the members of the Body of Christ-are united to him in a living relationship. This relationship is more intimate than we can possible conceive it to be, for, it is the intimacy of ‘belong[ing] to another, to him who has been raised from the dead in order that we may bear fruit for God’ (Rom. 7:4).¹¹ This implies union with Christ with a view to bringing forth -fruit with him-the same principle we find in John chapter 15, where we who are members of Christ are the branches of the vine that brings forth fruit.¹²

We notice, too, union with Christ in the death of the Cross, as also in his burial and resurrection. So he has risen that his Eve might rise from the dead in the spiritual union, and later at the Resurrection so that our bodies will be like his body of glory (Phil. 3:20-21). Wonderful as all this is, the eschatological fulfilment of the Adam-Eve union is the glorious climax of history, shown and sealed in the Marriage of the Bride and the Lamb. It is on this basis that all believers corporately (and each believer particularly) have union with Christ. Thus the truth of God’s history is that the Adam-Eve union, set forth protologically in Genesis 2:24, now constantly obtains in history. This means that Man, in the ultimate-at the telos-will have fulfilled the creational mandate of Genesis 1:28-30 because of his union as the Bride of Christ with Christ the Bridegroom. He will have brought forth fruit for God as the original Adam was called to do.

The other elements such as we find in Philippians 2:5-11 and Colossians 1:15 which are often according to his becoming and being the Second Adam, we can leave to a finer exegesis than we have here employed. The truth is that all who are in Christ by baptism into him are in their beloved Second Adam and one with him in his Person and Work. There is nothing of him of which they are outside. He is the Bridegroom and Husband of the Marriage which is indissoluble.

¹¹ Romans 7:4 in the *NRSV* is, ‘in the same way, my friends, you have died to the law through the body of Christ, so that you may belong to another, to him who has been raised from the dead in order that we may bear fruit for God’. Here as in the *RSV* it is to be noted that there is no comma after ‘raised from the dead’. The *AV*, *RV* and *NIV* supply the comma. The lack of the comma indicates that Christ rose from the dead in order that we should bring forth fruit.

¹² The idea of us bringing forth fruit in union with Christ is an important one. In John 15:16 Christ said, ‘You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide; so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you’. Fruitfulness is included in the mandate of Genesis 1:28-30, and is a mark of Edenic fullness. It is understandable that Man is in anxiety when he is unfruitful. Also note that in John 15:16 prayer is answered when fruitfulness is achieved through abiding in Christ-our Adam.

CHRIST AND THE *TELOS*

We have seen that our participation in Christ is not only in this life, but is intended for the climax of the *telos* and all eternity. In our last study we saw the things of this *telos* had their beginning in the things of Eden. We saw that in the context of God’s Sabbath rest these things of Eden were the Garden, the River of God, the Sanctuary-including the Worship Mountain-the place of the Throne, the place of Marriage, the habitation of Adam and Eve. We saw that these elements are present in all God’s history from the Proton to the Eschaton, and although Man is denied the way to the Tree of Life of the Garden, he is not denied the things of Eden. Of course he does eat of the Tree of Life when he eats of Christ incarnate. All these elements approximate to the gifts which were given specifically to Israel, and named by Paul in Romans 9:4-5, namely ‘the sonship, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises . . . [and] the Christ’. These seven gifts are essential to all mankind, especially for the purposes of salvation and being the people of God. We saw that Abel as a man of faith and love had these gifts, and all who followed in his way of life have also had them. The use of these gifts is most powerful in human history, just as for Satan and his kingdom the counter-gifts he raises have their own dynamic. It happens that history revolves around the use and abuse of these Divine gifts.

When we come to the *telos* we see the total glory of God as all things consummate in His Son, Jesus Christ. They also are reconciled in him, filled up by him, and are harmonised in the love of God.¹³ The Bride-the Holy City, New Jerusalem-is filled with the glory of God. The City is the home for all God’s elect. It is in fact Paradise-the New Eden. The Temple is God and the Lamb, as also they are its Light. The City is holy, has the River of Life flowing from the Throne of God and the Lamb, and on its banks is the Tree of Life which bears fruit perpetually and whose leaves have power to heal the nations-which healing has been accomplished by the time of the *telos*.

The Value of the *Telos* Proleptic

Whilst reading the last two chapters of Revelation we should note the use of tenses. Whilst all the elements of the *telos* are shown as being in the future, John the Elder is there at their climaxing. The prophetic exhortation flows from the presentation of these final things. Hope is always strengthened by prolepsis, and nothing is revealed which is not for our edification. In accordance with the principle of I Corinthians 2:6-14 the Holy Spirit settles in our hearts true understanding of the things of the future. Thus the revelation of these *telos* things is also hortatory and we need to heed its implicit injunction. An example of this is 21:27 and 22:1011 where warnings are issued against uncleanness:

But nothing unclean shall enter it [the Holy City], nor any one who practices abomination or falsehood, but only those who are written in the Lamb’s book of life.

And he said to me, ‘Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near. Let the evildoer still do evil, and the filthy still be filthy, and the righteous still do right, and the holy still be holy.’

Thus we have the value of the future and its power working presently within us-by faith in the prophetic word. The complete picture of the working of the Triune God is shown to us. God is seen as ‘All in all’. We have also seen that ‘God and the Lamb’ are constantly spoken of. They are as One. We can see that our life is ‘before God and the Lamb’, and because Christ is the one Mediator between God and Man, our lives are therefore intimately before him, and thereby before the Father. The ‘inexhaustible riches of Christ’ are our riches and ‘we are filled full in him’. All the end-things of the Father come to us through the Son. We are

¹³ Ephesians 1:10, Colossians 1:19-20, Ephesians 2:11-22, and Colossians 3:15.

intimately in love-union with our True Adam, because he has made us the true Eve. We are ‘bone of [his] bone and flesh of [his] flesh’. Thus we livingly know the *telos* and its various things.

We can say then that all the names, titles and offices of Christ are prophecies and attributed to him as the Ultimate Adam-the Second and Last Adam-who became incarnate, as such, in order to be and do what Adam reneged on being and doing in respect to the creation mandate of Genesis 1:28-30, so that he might now cause us to come to life eternal and be participators in the glory of God. All aspects of this true Adam are revealed in all things attributed to him, filled with mystery as they often appear. One thing in particular is a mystery, namely that this Adam fulfils God’s plan only through suffering. He as the Suffering Servant suffers in many ways to redeem his people, and they too share in ‘the fellowship of his suffering’ which is both the way to glory and the way of glory. Without suffering there can be no *telos*.

THE *TELOS* AND BEYOND

We have sufficient prophetic disclosures throughout Scripture to know what God is about. Amos 3:7 tells us this-‘Surely the Lord GOD does nothing, without revealing his secret to his servants the prophets. The lion has roared; who will not fear? The Lord GOD has spoken; who can but prophesy?’ We have also seen that ‘the testimony of Jesus is the spirit [Spirit?] of prophecy’. Christ, then, is in all things ‘For all the promises of God find their Yes in him’ (II Cor. 1:20). Our question now is, ‘Having come to the *telos*, the holy climax of history, what then?’

To some this question may seem pointless, foolish and even arrogant, as though the *telos* in itself were not sufficient for us, but that we must need to ask what lies beyond it. It is certainly true that to arrive at the *telos* will be all glorious. The rapture that the human spirit will know in being free of the trammels of death, of the presence of evil and of inner human fleshliness will be unspeakable. We shall surely revel in the presence of God, in being intimately with our Lord, in knowing God’s possession of us by His name written on our foreheads. The glorious prospect of uninterrupted love, joy and peace, and the now innate holiness of being will ensure our peace of being. Our manner of life in the Holy City as we are one with the entire redeemed human race will further ensure that we will understand the nature of Divine grace.

After the manner of this spontaneous joy and gratitude we will worship, and in our worship be one with all the other hosts of God. It will be perpetual worship and of the purest sort, because it will be worship with the Triune God, for the Temple will be ‘God and the Lamb’. It will thus be of the most intimate kind-filled with glory.

There is much more we could say regarding this marvellous *telos*, and perhaps it could all be summed up in Peter’s telling statement-‘the grace that is coming to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ’, for so many rich elements will be present of which, at the present, we do not even conceive. Of course, many elements have been implanted in our hearts by the Holy Spirit (I Cor. 2:9-10). Yet, given all this, what is the *telos* about? What is within it with a view to what, even then, will be? The question may seem strange but it is with a view to understanding what we might call ‘eternal continuity’. We can easily understand the release and the relief-of coming to resurrection, being freed from the presence and existence of evil, being ushered into the Divine Presence and worshipping Him, being His children and beloved Family. We can visualise in a way what it will be to be with the beloved Bridegroom as his Bride and, as those who have overcome, to inherit all things, dazzling as that thought may be. Certainly we can rise to the idea of eternal worship, and respond to the intimation of perpetual music as worship, but to have an even continuity of all these can also bewilder the mind. Perhaps this is so because we have not worked out the Divine logic of it all, and this we shall attempt to do, however feeble our efforts may appear to be; however feeble they may even be!

PARTICIPATION IN THE *TELOS*

In the Book of the Revelation chapters 1 and 2 we have seven promises to those who overcome, that is, those who conquer the forces against them in the battle. It is noticeable that all promises are eschatological. They speak of overcomers eating of the tree of life which is in the paradise of God, of not being hurt by the second death, of eating of the hidden manna and having a stone on which is written that overcomer’s hitherto hidden identity-the identity for eternity-of being given power of the nations and of receiving the morning star, of being clad in white garments as one granted eternal life, of being made a pillar in the temple of Christ’s God, and having put upon him the name of the new Jerusalem, the eternal city of God, and of being seated on the throne of God with Christ who has been thus seated by God.

These are interesting statements because they link with Revelation 21:7 where the overcomes will be known as a son of God and will inherit all things, ‘all things’ being the new heaven and the new earth. Whilst it is understood that all these fascinating elements are ‘in Christ’ and not of the overcomes himself, yet what will it be to inherit all things, to have power over the nations-the nations, presumably-who flow into the Holy City? We are here reminded of one of Christ’s parables (Matt. 25:14-30; Luke 19:12-28) where those who have faithfully used the talents given to them will be given authority over a number of cities; for some a few cities, for others even more.

The question is, ‘What does this mean in relation to the *telos*?’ In Philippians 3:10-16 Paul speaks of wanting to know the power of Christ’s resurrection, the fellowship of his suffering and being conformed to the death of Christ ‘that if possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead’. He is already assured he will share in that resurrection but the words which follow verse 10 seem to indicate he wants what Peter calls (II Pet. 1:10-11) ‘an abundant entrance into the Kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ’. This is similar to what Paul speaks about in I Corinthians 3:10-15, that a person can either be saved ‘as by fire’ or he will receive a reward for his genuine works- a much richer outcome. That is somewhat indicated in Galatians 6:8 where the one who sows to the Spirit will have a harvest of eternal life, ‘eternal life’ here meaning more than resurrection, for all who believe (John 5:24) are assured eternal life and resurrection. It surely must relate to the *mode* of resurrection. In II John 8 the Apostle speaks about not losing what one has worked for, so that one may ‘win a full reward’. Fruitfulness is expected of Man from the very beginning (c.f. Gen. 1:28).

What, then, are these Scriptures speaking about? One is given the impression in Romans 8:17-30 that not only the elect humanity receives ‘the liberty of the glory of the children of God’, but the whole creation which at present is in bondage to futility. The whole creation that will be-the new heaven and the new earth-will share in that liberty of the children of God, and that must refer to the original creation and the lordship of Adam over it. We know that the celestial part of the creation has multitudes of angels, archangels, cherubim and seraphim, all of whom exist in hierarchies, and who are constantly serving God, so that they are a functional whole promoting the living and ruling glory of God. Will this order then change, and what is the meaning of Paul’s statement in I Corinthians 6:3 that we will judge angels?

Surely all of these indications-especially the one that we will inherit all things-are that there will be relational orders which will function, dynamic hierarchies of saints and angels qualified to carry out the will of God in the operations that begin with the *telos* but are not confined to it. The *telos* is the climax just as the *eschaton* is the age and action which leads to it, but the *telos* surely does not establish a functional status quo, an order which keeps an order repetitive of itself. The creational work of God will have its reflection in the order of creative action by the renewed terrestrial and celestial creatures. When we understand worship and service to be the one, then the permutations-if we may call them that-of worship and service will be multifarious and varied. Is worship then only service and service only worship, or are there other actions which take us beyond even this rich ministry to God? Only such a question and such an observation is possible in the dynamic world of the Alpha and Omega Father-Son relationship in the Holy Spirit. We admit the indications are few, but the

telos appears to be not only the fulfilment of one age of God, but also the protological beginning of another. Whenever we come to a terminus it is in order to explore what lies in its vicinity, what lies about and beyond it.

CONCLUSION TO OUR STUDY OF CHRIST AS THE ALPHA AND THE OMEGA

We have seen that in the *eschaton* both the Father and the Son are cited as Kings of the Kingdom. The Son is also the Mediator of the Everlasting Covenant of which His Father is the Initiator. The two inhabit the Eternal Throne together, doubtless with the wisdom and fellowship of the Holy Spirit. In Revelation they are both named 'the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End', for they are in all the being and work from the Alpha to the Omega. At the End, God and the Lamb are the Holy Temple, and the Light of the Holy City. The Son, having put down every enemy with the help of the Father, gives the Kingdom to God that the Father may be 'all in all'.

So, then, we conclude that the work which God gave to Adam to do and he did not do, the Second Adam has done, and he is worthy to receive all adulation and attribution that the adoring creatures of heaven and earth give to their God. It is under Adam-our King, our Lord, our Adam and our Bridegroom-that we shall be one in the *telos*, and work out the will of God in all eternity. All his titles, names and offices tell us afresh what our relationship will be with him, and what our life shall be under him.

How majestic is God's name in all the earth!